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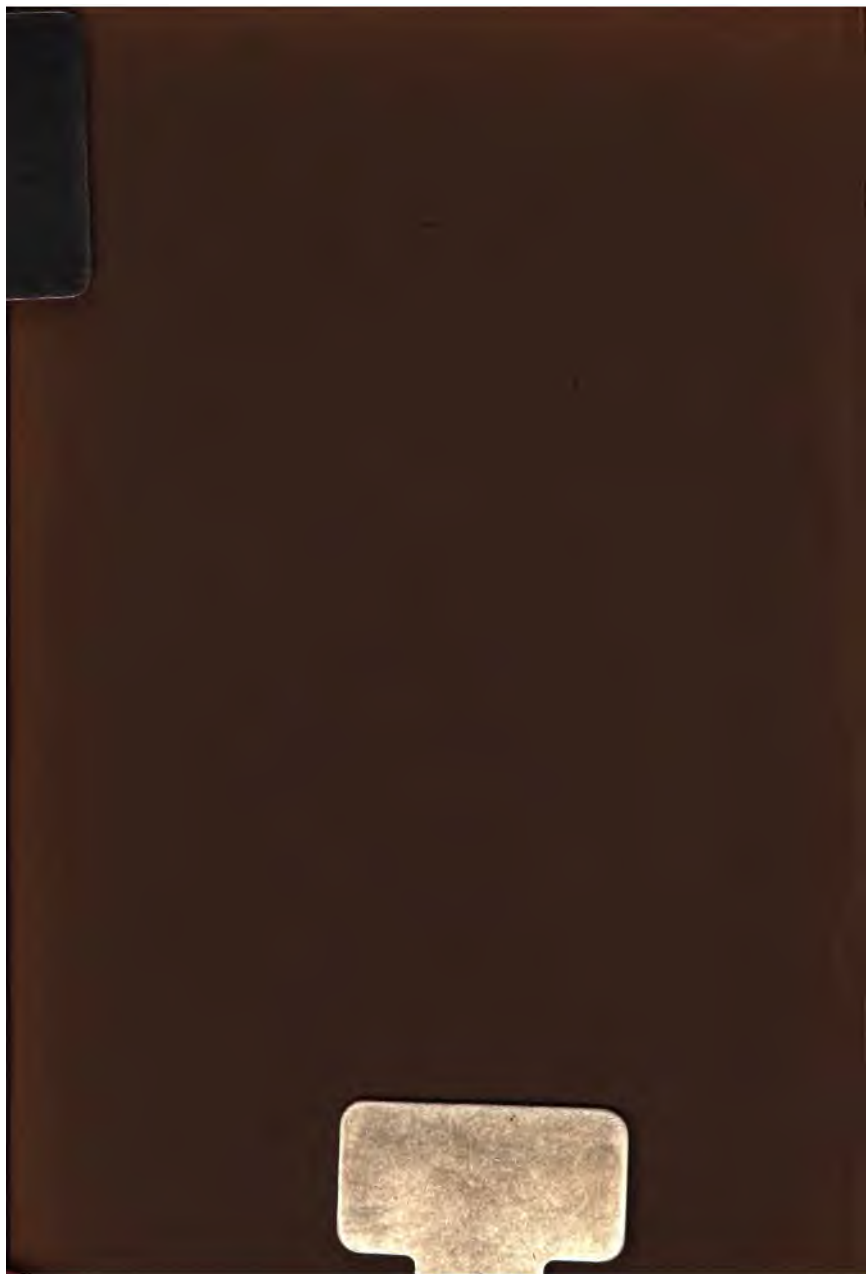
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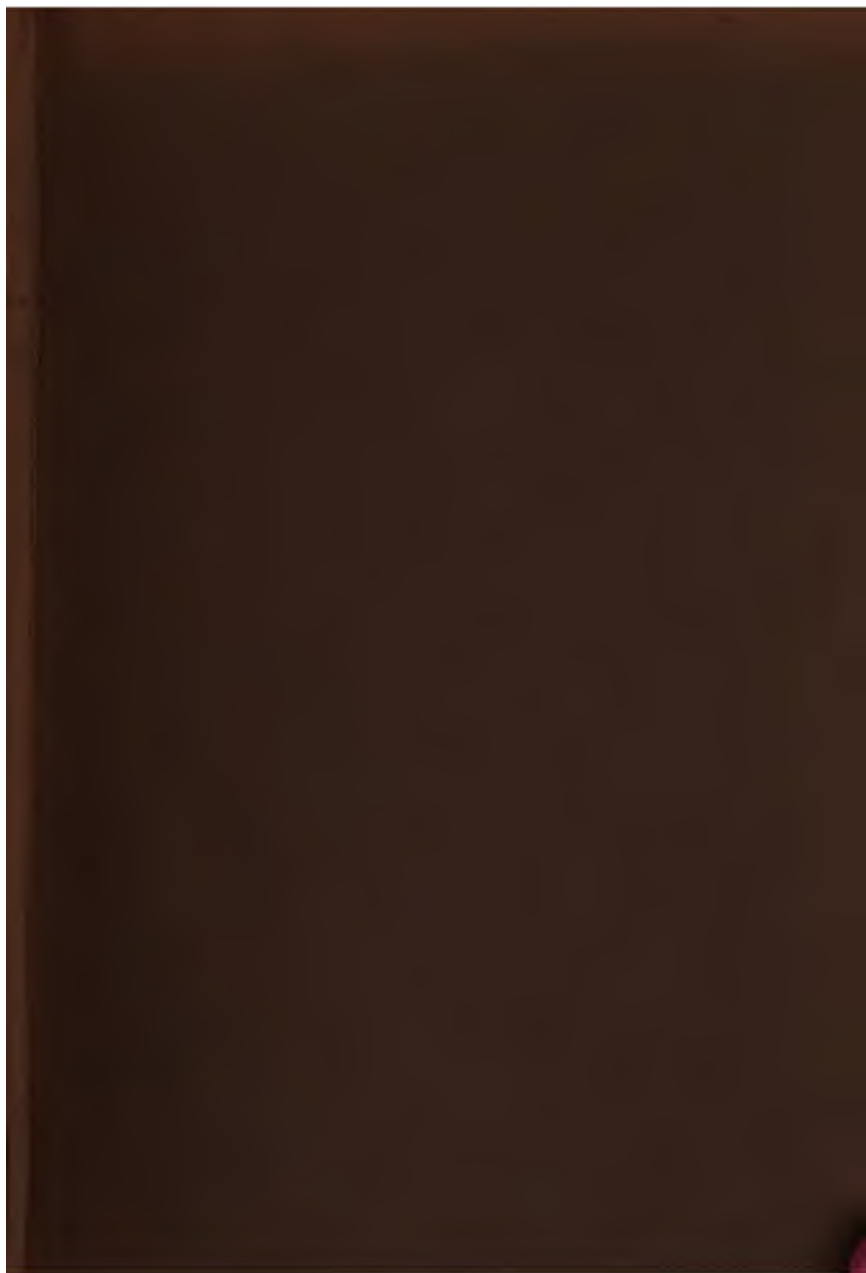
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THE PERFECT MAN

THE PERFECT MAN

OR

Jesus an Example of Godly Life



BY THE

REV. HARRY JONES, M.A.

INCUMBENT OF ST. LUKE'S, BERWICK STREET

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PREFACE.

*To the Congregation of St. Luke's Church,
Berwick Street.*

I HAVE been occasionally asked to publish some more Sermons, and in reply to these requests I print the substance of a course of lectures I preached in St. Luke's Church some time ago. They have been recast in the form now before you, and rewritten.

Yours faithfully,

HARRY JONES.

May, 1869.

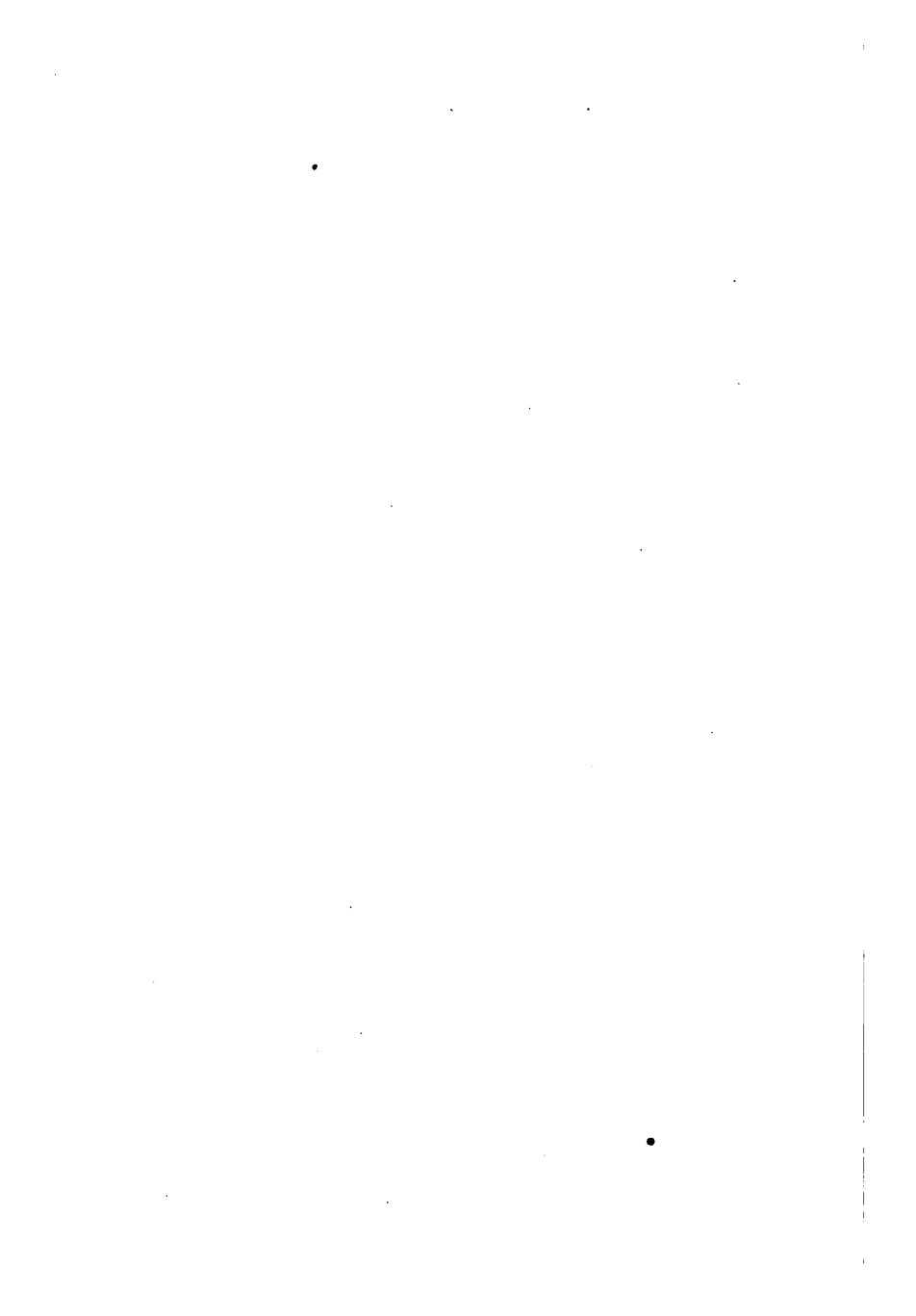
P.S.—It will be seen that in these pages I have not dwelt upon our Lord's

Divinity, nor the sacrifice of the Christ for the sins of the world. I have tried to confine myself to the subject indicated in the title of this little work, "The Perfect Man; or, Jesus an Example of Godly Life."

In one page I have repeated a few sentences from a previous publication of my own, as they seemed to say what I then wanted as well as any fresh form of words I could provide for my meaning.

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THE PERFECT MAN



JESUS AN EXAMPLE.

JESUS did not come to set an example.

That was not the object of His mission. He came to do the will of God, and to seek and to save those that were lost. For this purpose He bore witness unto the truth and sacrificed Himself. Had He come with the chief and final intention of setting an example, the consciousness and prospect of being judged by Him would be terrible rather than consoling, for we should be haunted by the thought that He was ever comparing us with Himself. But while we look up to Him who suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, we see a lesson before us in the road. As man He becomes an example of Godly life which we may well study. He grows from childhood to full stature. At

length, having passed through the blessed steps of His most holy life, He is obedient unto death, and the perfection of human sinlessness is revealed in Jesus the Son of Man. In Him we may perceive not merely unique and admirable perfection, but the perfect fulfilment of human life in one to whom we are kin.

We may therefore well ask, what are those steps which we pray for grace to follow? What is there in His life which we may aim at ourselves? I think we shall find that Jesus is an Example not so much in the particular works which He did as in the way in which He filled the various positions He occupied towards God and man, the way in which He met the various kinds of trial through which He passed as man.

The lives of all exhibit some common phases. Every one has to learn. Every one has some calling, is sent here to do something. Every one exercises some influence over his fellows, i. e. is more or less a teacher. Every one has to work. Every one has to suffer. Every one

has to die. Every one, in the largest sense, passes through death into another state.

Now if we would read the Gospels carefully, with a desire to learn how Jesus carried Himself in each of these positions of life, we should apprehend how He may be our Example better than if we were to fix our gaze on particular acts which He did, and which might dishearten us by their grandeur and excellence. It is from His way of life, rather than from the work which came of it, that we can best learn how to lead a good life ourselves.

I will venture to approach that lesson by looking first at the days of Jesus, and the significant illustration of much that characterizes Perfect Life in the circumstances of His birth. We will then examine the broad features of His example as a learner, as one who had a mission, as a teacher, a worker, and a sufferer. We will then see the record of His death and resurrection, with a desire to find that in them which connects Him with ourselves as Perfect Man.

THE DAYS OF JESUS.

WE all know that "Christian" was at first a nickname given to the obscure follower of Christ, but owing to a habit of thought which we have contracted from reading the New Testament where the follower of Christ is spoken of as persecuted and despised, we are apt to forget that Christianity is now the religion of power and progress throughout the world. However much they may differ among themselves, and do despite unto the spirit of grace, the Emperors, Sovereigns, Princes, and Peoples of Europe profess Christianity. And in the new world, great nations, wide empires, and growing colonies are professedly Christian. Christians are the chief rulers, fighters, traders, explorers, and manufacturers of the earth. Those large territories

in which the spirit of civilization, however old, is languid, and those in which it is minutely busy rather than nationally progressive, those which receive impressions from others instead of giving them, are not Christian. Christianity marks established power and vigorous enterprise. Viewed as a dominant creed rather than a principle of holiness, it has already overcome the world. In some senses and places the saint afflicts the sinner, and the worldly man has more tribulation in the Church than the Christian in the world.

We need not wonder at any creed, however pure in its origin, being marred by such honour and success. So changed or corrupted has Christianity become in some parts that those who profess it seem almost to forget its Founder and the signs of its beginning. Even now in England it is cumbered with so many disputes that we are tempted to occupy ourselves with them, instead of looking back to its source, and seeing for ourselves the foundation upon which it rests, and the life out of which it arose. We find these in the

history of Jesus. But it is hard to read the Gospels in a simple way. Time and distance mar our view of the persons and the things of which we are told in the New Testament. We are conscious, sometimes almost oppressively, of a huge mass of comment, ecclesiastical structure, and ingenious theory which has gathered round the kernel of the truth as it is in Jesus. We shrink from the effort to realize the original record of His life lest we should unwittingly lower our sense of reverence for what is sound and true by passing by without sufficient respect the stores of holy learning and evidences of devout life which lie in the road back through Church history to the source of Christianity itself. Such considerations as these tend to cumber us if we try to read the Gospels in a simple way. And there are other hindrances beside those which are scholastic and ecclesiastical. Painting and poetry have shed their influence upon the scenes of the Gospels. These have been gradually moulded and adapted to the religious instincts and traditions of the countries

which accept them, so that the original appears ever more antique or dim. To many of us the Son of Man and His companions seem to live and move in a strange and peculiar world. They were poor and despised in their own day, but now their history is associated not only with the gathering of councils, the construction of world wide creeds, and the growth of the Catholic Church with its imperative claims and manifold influence, but with high art, social refinement, and luxurious expenditure. When we think of Jesus now we are in some measure compelled to retain these things in view. We see Christendom and its history when we try to look at the Christ of Galilee and Judæa. From the beginning to the end we are met by intellectual and artistic renderings of His life. It is the Paradise of Milton, the Madonna of Raphael, and the Last Supper of Leonardo da Vinci. The very sick and beggars whom Jesus healed and comforted, and the sinners whom He received, seem to belong to a race which has passed away. They are not men and women, but models for

the artist and the sculptor. Jesus Himself appears on canvas as a sort of Christian Apollo. The Apostles stand around Him in graceful pose and appropriate drapery. If they are represented as fishermen they look like fishermen on the stage. The Publicans are all like Matthew and Zaccheus, full of devout impulse. The harlots are Magdalenes, piteous and tearful, repenting themselves in postures of beautiful remorse. The audience of Jesus groups itself with artistic effect. Sinners are converted, hypocrites unmasked, and the unrighteous rebuked with conspicuous accompanying testimony of attitude and feature. The common people devour His words with parted lips and brimming eyes. The Pharisees scowl and clench their hands aside in dramatic discomfiture. All are picturesque, intellectual, or interesting. Thus it is hard for us to have a true vision of Jesus as He was. But I am sure that it is a blessed work to try to travel back through the mist of centuries, that, standing in the fresh field of history, we may fill our lungs with the keen morning air

of Christian truth. We should sometimes put out of our minds what we have learnt from poets, painters, and commentators about the life and death of Jesus, and strive to see Him as He is in the very Gospels themselves. We are aided in the attempt by the reflection that the old world must have been like the new in the main. Then swaddled infants cried, children played, lovers wooed, men sweated at their work, the old nursed themselves in the noon-day shine and at the evening fireside. Then the sun scorched the face, and the road blistered the feet. Then sores and rags were foul, and vice impudent or loathsome. Then the fisherman's boat was wet with scale and weed. The multitude was the mob, and the Judgment Hall the Magistrate's Court, with the vulgar atmosphere and unfeeling presence of criminal and warder. Then the scene on Calvary itself was a public execution with more shame and suffering than is put upon a felon now. The Christian cross was a heathen gibbet.

In reading the Gospels, then, we should

strive to see what they show us with our own eyes, and not through the haze of accumulated ecclesiastical refinement, or the spectacles of religious romance. Thus and thus only can we look upon the "Perfect Man" who belongs to us and our latest days as truly as He did to those of old time.

We should also try to realize the social position of Jesus and His apparent relationship to the Jewish Church and religious world of His day. We must not set too much store by His royal descent. It is true that some in their eagerness to represent Jesus as a man of the people rather than of the nobility, overlook what many consider to have been His high human birth. But He was hailed as Royal by the bulk of the nation. The very beggar by the way side cried out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" When He rode into Jerusalem, "the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!'" and the sting of Pilate's insult to the people when he

set the title on the cross, lay in its truth: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews."

But we must not make too much account of this, for He Himself did not rest His claims upon it. The title He loved to bear was "Son of Man;" and there was all the more grace and significance in this because if He had aimed at such a kingdom as the people desired, He would evidently have had them at His side. Indeed the multitude turned against Him at the last because He would not assert His royal claims, and try to restore a kingdom which had been the snare of the people of God. "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had dared to do what the people hoped Jesus would have done. He had at least drawn the sword, however vainly. He had raised an insurrection in the city, and risked the danger of apprehension by the Roman police who kept watch over the turbulent populace of Jerusalem. And so he won the suffrage of the short-sighted mob which was vexed at the thought that Jesus, whom they, in a sense, acknowledged as king, and

had once tried to crown by force, would not stir the sword in its sheath, but kept up the, to them, dreary, barren strain of spiritual truth and announcement of the kingdom of heaven, without, as they thought, daring to pass from a word to a blow, and put His high pretensions or powers to the test of action. Therefore we must not lay great stress on His high human descent, as set forth by the historian of His genealogy, except as it enables us to estimate the excellence of the example which we have in Him as the "Perfect Man."

And in like manner we must not dwell too fondly on His lowly station at Nazareth. It is not just to speak of Him as a Galilæan peasant. We may correct our modern popular estimate of His position as a "working man" by the reflection that every Jew, even such a one as the highly-educated Saul, learnt a trade; and any inferences flattering to a particular class, which may be drawn from the fact of His having worked as a carpenter, must be balanced by the other fact that He was hailed by the people as a king, and is chro-

nicked in the Gospel History as of royal blood.

These considerations will help us to think of Him as one who is identified with no class, but as the "Perfect Man," and, as such, an example of life to every man of whatever station he may be.

We may also notice that ecclesiastics can lay no more special claim to Him than the laity. It is true, as we shall see when we come to examine the character of His teaching, that in laying down the law He always appealed more or less directly to men's own natural sense of right and truth; but those ardent reformers who arise in every age, exalting human reason above God's guidance, and setting philosophy against the Church, should recollect that no one ever showed more love for the true Church than Jesus. He not only kept the religious feast, but purified the Temple. He not only prayed and fasted, but taught others how to pray and fast. He honoured the Scriptures with repeated and reverent use and exposition. So far was He

from desiring to upset the fabric of what we understand by religion that He protested, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, and the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

On the other hand His position was not, strictly speaking, that of an ecclesiastic. Though Himself the fount of true priesthood, no one ever curbed and cut down the spirit of priestly ambition and intolerance more severely than Jesus. He would not let the leper He had cured return to his family without making the customary offering to the priests, and receiving from them the legal certificate of his recovery; but He arrayed against Himself the fiercest hatred of the sacerdotal class, by exposing their narrow interpretation of the Bible and the great laws of God.

Thus neither the sublime philosopher nor the severe ecclesiastic can establish an exclusive claim upon Jesus. He taught them both that which often they both forget, namely, that
a craving in the soul which neither

can supply alone. There is a Divine appetite of humanity for which neither the clearest logic and the broadest principles of the one, nor the strictest formulas of the other, are sufficient. Whatever class or cast of mind we look at we shall still see in Jesus the "Perfect Man;" always showing in Himself something which hinders His being the special possession of any person or party. He stands alone above all, He sees beyond all, and yet He is in true communion with each.

THE BIRTH OF THE PERFECT MAN.

THE birth of the Perfect Man is not so much an example as an illustration of perfect life. We will try to realize the fact itself and the circumstances which attended it as they are recorded in the Gospels now accepted by the Church. For it is my purpose to use in these pages the evangelical history without reference to the critical comments which most educated people are aware have been put forward with a view towards a corrected record of the life of Jesus. These do not come within the scope of this little work. I take the Gospels as they stand, and out of them desire to indicate some phases of true humanity which seem to flow from their record of the "Perfect Man." Let us, then, look at the story of His birth.

The little town of Bethlehem, rock-built and lonely, was astir with unwilling pilgrims. They had left the sheepfold, the vineyard, the workman's bench, and the fisherman's boat at the decree of Cæsar Augustus. All went to be taxed, every one to his own city. They were probably in no mood for the courtesies of life. The first comers had served themselves best. They were tempted to appropriate, sulkily enough, such accommodation as they could get. We are left to imagine the arrival of the road-stained Nazarene and his young travelling wife. Perhaps they were turned away from the inn door by the porter with gestures of dissent. There was no room for them. Perhaps the more fortunate lodgers who stood about the entrance saw their discomfort with selfish congratulations that they had found a place where they might lay their heads. They went on with their small talk and little stratagems for comfort after the poor couple had passed wearily on, and then argued noisily over their suppers or yawned upon their beds while Jesus was being born hard by, so

closely can the greatest events come to pass at the elbow of a rude, blind world.

May be some mother in Israel, touched with the distress of Mary and her pensive face, stayed by her in her hour of anguish with such kind offices as the poor use to the poor. We do not know. God remembers. But while the people in the town little guessed that Bethlehem was then immortalized, and the fulness of that inn recorded to the end of time, there were some who caught glimpses of the stir that birth had made among the spirits that wait upon God.

We are told that the unseen people of the air, the angels which guard young children, smile over penitents, bring the bread of heaven and the wine divine to the weary soldiers of the truth, and execute God's wrath on every one that loveth and maketh a lie, were flying all abroad that night. There were shepherds who saw one, brimful of gospel, reveal his message and himself; and then for a moment the chorus swept down out of the midnight sky which makes the motto of the new dispensation.

The subsequent visit of the shepherds to Bethlehem left no recorded impression upon the people of the town. Wonders were cheap then. But there is that in the scene which touches us to the quick if we have an eye for the humanity of Jesus and the homeliness of Christian worship. We may learn some lessons of Catholic piety and truth from these rough skin-clad men, with the smell of their sheepfold about them, crowding, crook in hand, over the new-born child, with rustic reverence and wondering gesture.

The sign of the Christ was to them, "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." And, as men judge, a strange unlikely sign it was. There appears no Divine significance in it. The speciality of the direction is the strangeness of the infant's cradle, otherwise He was like another child in face, and dress, and voice.

But though the sign given to the shepherds looks mean to some who draw upon their dramatic fancies for a picture of the Saviour's birth, yet to those who read the Gospels with

a virgin eye, it is an acted infant parable of all that Jesus, the Perfect Man, both was and did. It agrees with His humble youth. How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Is not this the carpenter? It agrees with His poverty. He did not read Esaias in His chariot, but journeyed on foot, sun-scorched, weary, and dry. It agrees with His later homelessness. The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head. It agrees with His last supper in the borrowed room, when He girded Himself with a towel, and poured water into a basin, and washed His disciples' feet. It agrees with His death, when He stained and hallowed a slave's gibbet with His blood.

To some perhaps the humanity of Jesus is exceptional. We put a halo round the infant's head. But that was not the shepherd's sign. May be we are almost afraid to think of Jesus as He was, lest we should be shocked at the roughness and nakedness of the picture. But one consequence of this timidity is a narrow estimate of His interest in mankind, and a loss

of the power by which we may take Him as an example of holy life.

Many are chiefly reminded of Him by those things which they think most unlike the world He entered, and the sinners, great and small, He came to save. The chime to prayers heard in the hubbub of the city, the dim religious light of the window-painted church into which they turn out of the street, the spire across the fields, the sacred cross-emblazoned book, nay, even the priestly dress and visage, recall most readily to the minds of some what they associate with Jesus. Thus they are apt to think of Him as the special possession of the educated, the intellectual, and the refined, and as having little natural connexion with the pretentious, the unpicturesque, the commonplace, the ignorant, the purse-proud, and the coarse, who are so many. But when we hear the sign of His birth, when we reflect on the poor shift His mother was put to for a cradle, and the honours which accompanied His first infancy, there is something in the thought which helps us to understand how Catholic is

•

His sympathy with man, and how truly He is an example of a godly life. He did not come as a poor man or as a rich man. Herdsmen and kings alike claimed Him as He lay in His cradle.

And this was an earnest of His afterwork. He did not join Himself to any class; He sat at the Pharisee's table, and touched the Samaritan leper. He mingled His raising of the ruler's daughter with the cure of the lone penniless woman, and He was taken down from the slave's cross to be laid in the rich man's tomb.

All, and chiefly pastors and masters, may learn from this not to parcel out people into parties and classes when they try to teach them what they think they know. As one touch of nature makes the whole world kin, so the true, simple word is fitted to the heart of each, whether he be great or small. The nearer a man is to the stature of a divine teacher, the less will he have of that pedantic spirit which addresses the learned in great swelling words of wisdom, and the unlearned

in small, childish sentences of thin and watered sense.

The sign of the shepherds may also help our estimate of revelation as contained in, and characteristic of the Bible, and so better enable us to see the example of Jesus the Perfect Man. We do not find the Word of God accord with our puffed-up notions of the tremendous and majestic. God's will is displayed in a rough cradle and upon a rougher cross. As in nature not an apple falls to the ground without the will of our Father which is in heaven, so in the Bible, from the fruit in Eden to the vinegar on Calvary, we find great truths dressed in common words, even as the Son of God was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.

This sign too helps us to realize the simplicity of godly work. We are told that it is pure religion to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world; but this is too free a saying to please those who exalt some intricate scheme of Christian ministry and motives.

And yet how well it suits the sign of Christ's birth.

We shall see this clearer in an example. Some who set themselves eagerly to relieve "Christ's poor" have their aspirations rudely shocked when they begin to put them into practice. The poor, as well as the rich, are sometimes exacting and ungracious. The first experimental application of that religion which is undefiled before God and the Father is often dull, if not repulsive. The widow is crafty or querulous, the orphan greedy. The disappointed day-dreamer of holy ministry might have found a fit and wholesome preparation for his work in gazing on the cradle of Jesus. But we must not look for a Madonna in the carpenter's wife whose children are sick and whose store is empty, nor for a Simeon in the shaky white-haired pauper who supplements our reading of a holy psalm by whining for an alms.

We may find godliness, bright as a diamond on a dunghill, in the back room of a foul court, and learn a lesson instead of giving one; but

we must not be surprised if we come upon the distasteful circumstances of the manger without the obvious presence of the Christ. His spirit may be near, though we perceive it not, because we look for the sign of an ideal Christ, who separates Himself from all that is selfish and unrefined.

Do we, however, suppose that He was charmed with the foul sights of an Eastern mob which pushed and clamoured for the loaves and fishes while He yearned to show to them the signs of God?

In taking Jesus as an ensample of godly life there are many other cautions which we may gather from the first revelation of His manhood. It might remind us of the quiet beginning of true Christian work. How unnoticed was the approach of that influence which was destined to affect the whole world! There was a spasm of inquiry when the wise men came with their calm questions to Herod and the Scribes, but it soon died down. There was no great outburst of popular feeling, no swift redress of popular wrongs, no violent

uprooting of false creeds, no throwing down of images at the entrance of Jesus into the world.

Thus we may learn that the beginning of all great works, and most especially of all sound revolutions, which are attractive to some who desire to take Jesus as an example, are quiet as the growth of trees for the forest, or the gathering of clouds for the thunderstorm. They may grow into giants in time, they may shake the earth at last; but they must first survive the retarding dispersive influences which are always abroad, and which, at His bidding, decide whether the oak and the tempest are wanted by God.

Those, too, who are eager to mend the world by spiritual means, should bear in mind that, as a rule, there are no things more worldly and ungodlike than sudden improvements. When Jesus came He did not enter on His public ministry for thirty years. And when He began to teach He taught the Gospel, but not under the title of Christianity. He did not coin names for opinions. For this cause was

He born, that He might bear witness unto the truth. There was nothing strangely sudden or subversive in His ministry. It agreed with the sign of His birth. It teaches us some of the first lessons on the conduct of human life. It helps us to believe that we can be one with Him and He with us, however lowly we may seem to be. For even when we contract our view and look within the widening circle of Christian influence and progress to the little spot of our own work, we shall find the first sign of Jesus help us to take Him as an example. He came to do the will of His Father which was in heaven. He had no higher aim. We can have no lower.

A man should keep this in his eye, and simply naturally do the work which is unfolded before him in his passage from the cradle through the world. It may make a stir some day; it may not. God knows. What we do and say as true followers of Jesus will not be lost, for it will be God's, not ours, and will take its place in the train of His great work who was sent to destroy the works of

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the devil, and to take away the sins of the world, but whose first sign, "wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger," marked Him as one of the simplest among us rather than another.

THE GROWTH OF THE PERFECT MAN.

THE power of learning which man possesses is one of the clearest marks of his place in the kingdom of heaven. It distinguishes him from other creatures and from their common Creator. Lower animals learn after their fashion; sometimes in a way and to an extent which almost startles us, but their learning is not human. It is not self-seeding. It does not grow or spread. The horse knows the voice of his master, and remembers the drill of the troop, but he seems to be unconscious of his accomplishments. They do not set him to acquire more, he must always be taught. The bird repeats words and sentences with a senseless accuracy which has provided a form of reproof to those who learn

by rote alone. Moreover the most sagacious animals never set themselves to communicate their special knowledge to their fellows. They converse and tell one another the news of their own world with an intelligence that surprises and entertains us, but whatever they learn to do beyond the scope of instinct perishes with them. It leaves no heritage of genius to serve as a standing-place and point of departure for the further advance of their posterity.

But man is more than taught. He learns with an intelligent desire for information, and he goes on learning. He assimilates the brains of the dead and carries on an inquiry from the stage in which it was left by his predecessors. His learning is cumulative and its spirit is contagious. His thought sets other people thinking. Thus it distinguishes him from the lower animals of creation. I need hardly say that the faculty of learning distinguishes him from the Creator in whose image and likeness he was made. He who knoweth all things is God. It is impossible

for God to grow wiser than He is. But man increases in wisdom. That eminently characterizes him; and this sign is obvious to intelligent minds. Have we not a sign which divides us from the lower creation, and sets us above the monotony of animal instinct? Are we not conscious of ignorance and progress? Have we not visions of unstored capacity and ultimate power which cheer us on even in the midst of errors and falls, and may be developed without sin? Is there not something within us which accepts as no mocking impossibility, the sentence, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"? Can we not see that there may be an aim before us from the first to the last, and that we are bidden to fill each stage in the road towards it perfectly? Can we not at least, however impotent and faulty we may be, conceive of a man who should rise through all the periods of stature both of mind and body, without any check or failure in his passage, from the womb of his mother upon earth to the right hand of his Father which is in

heaven, so as to be perfect at every step of his life? If not, I do not see how we can apprehend the human nature of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We say that He was "Perfect Man." Humanity involves spiritual as well as physical growth. Can we speak of our Lord as Perfect Man, and yet strip Him of that? Is His relation to us merely anatomical? Can flesh, blood, and bones complete the perfection of man's nature? Was He only the model of a man, a human corpse, animated by the Godhead? That is not the teaching of the Scripture. There we learn that He was tempted on all points like as we are, and that He suffered being tempted. That must mean that He was really pressed by temptations, the charm or terror of which lies in the sense of uncertainty which accompanies them.

If, as man, He saw beforehand with immovable accuracy the issue of every trial He underwent, He would be like a mere actor on a stage who knows that the adversary will not really hurt him, though the spectators are

thrilled and faint at the encounter. If He were such an actor, however capable of being exhausted with His performances, and carried away by His interest in the part and piece He played, we should be constrained to perceive sadly that He was far removed from us when we felt the prick of real pain, the sting of real ingratitude, the weight of real pressure and the suspense of real delay.

As long as we fancied we were safe and felt ourselves gladsome we might listen to the tragedy of the wilderness, Gethsemane, and the crucifixion, like epicures in sentiment luxuriously tasting the pathos of a scene which stirred the air of a pleasure-seeking life, and then, as people who laugh with quicker relish when they have enjoyed the thrill of tears, return with a sharper appetite to the common diet of sensation.

We might thus prize the more sublime and terrible record of the Gospel history, as the chief acts of a noble and wonderful drama, and even relish the frequent repetition of some familiar scenes; but in more sensitive moods

our uplifted yearning for sympathy in our hopes and fears would shrink from One who never really hoped, never really feared, but left heaven to put on the mere fleshly clothes and perform the character of man in the world, as the master of a theatre might step down for an hour out of his position to wear the dress and act the part of a servant upon the stage.

It is therefore with the deepest gratitude and adoration that we bow before the fact that the Son of God was truly the Son of Man. We thank God that Jesus increased in wisdom as well as stature. The Son is incomprehensible, but this one thing the Church of Christ knows, that though He were a Son yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. And in taking the blessed steps of His most holy life He became an example to man in learning.

He was no actor. It was with some child-like wonder at His parent's ignorance that He asked, "How is it that ye sought Me, wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" They were struggling, trustful words

with which He resisted the suggestions of the devil, not merely histrionic replies uttered in the pauses of temptation. It was with true amazement that He "marvelled" at the unbelief of the Nazarenes and faith of the Centurion. It was with no feigned pity for their faintness, and desire to give them repose, that He bade His disciples come apart and rest awhile, although the multitude outwent them and frustrated His purpose. It was with real disappointment that He cried, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!" It was surely with perfect truth that He declared to His inquisitive Apostles that no one, not even the Son, knew when the end of the world should be. It must have been with awful sincerity that He prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me."

Jesus was not manlike, but man. With the testimony of the Scriptures before us we cannot believe that, *as man*, He had full, minute predictive instructions about the issue of every

scene through which He passed, having alone, of all that ever trod the earth, an access, as man, to the history of the future. We cannot believe that He took all the blessed steps of His most holy life after a Divine programme, the items of which He saw before as clearly as behind Him, that He passed through a series of various forms of temptation in order to show us the attitudes which became a Son of Man.

Perhaps the first feeling kindled by the reality of our Lord's increase, as a man, in wisdom and His learning of obedience, is one of intense gratitude.

We might endure, if we knew with infallible certainty that we should triumph. To some extent we bear pain when it comes. We face the evil when it lifts the veil and shows itself plainly, but we dread that which is uncertain and unseen. They are the shrouded forms of harm and sin which turn us faint and pale. These make us watch the sick friend's face with secret fear lest at any moment the colour of life's flame should change, as if the invisible angel of death had then come into the room

and taken his place by the bed, content to wait, may be for weeks, but there throwing his white shadow on the eye and skin. Uncertainty saddens us then. This too makes us almost hide away our face as the soul which we have loved and tried to guard trips gaily on the brink of hell. This makes us fret when some work which we have deeply at heart draws near to its full growth, but we doubt whether it may not fail yet. This makes us exceeding sorrowful when troubles are heaped upon our back and we cannot think how we shall endure unto the end. This makes us pray when the soul is dull, or sore, or dry. And therefore with deep gratitude we accept the blessed truth that He, He who is filled with unutterable love, and has all power given unto Him in heaven and in earth, can understand what we feel. When we are in dread He knows the kind of trouble we have. Though He overcame, He cannot forget that there was a strain of apprehensive agony in His conflict.

It was a profound thought and not a mere

obvious device which made some painters of the Judgment Day show the scars in the hands and feet of the glorified and triumphant Jesus. He can never lose the memory of His pains and shame, inasmuch as they were not put on like a Lenten dress, to be taken off at Easter, but were part of Himself, entered into His soul, and so betrayed themselves in His being, both in this life and in that which is to come.

The next great lesson to be gathered from the learning of Jesus is that human ignorance is no necessary degradation. When enjoyed or defended it degrades us, but when we yield ourselves to the teaching of God, it is no more shameful or derogatory to the saintliest soul, than the weakness of the child whose bones and muscles are as yet half grown. Our learning lasts through this life at least. The things which even He suffered, and by which He learned obedience, stretched from the manger to the cross; and thus we too in our small way are but children in the nursery of God, though we may show ourselves wise and white-headed among men. The small surface

troubles of infancy and the deep sorrows of ripe age are alike steps in the path of life wherein Jesus is our ensample. Trials and temptations are sent to help us on towards the righteousness of the Son of Man. He, the Captain of our Salvation, was made perfect through sufferings, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. In this sense, too, He was tempted like as we are, i. e. for an analogous purpose. In Him temptation wrought its perfect work, and it is intended to raise us towards the measure of the stature of Christ. Man's growth stretches onwards through the grave, the great trial which bounds our sight. We are never really taken out of the mill of tribulation, though we sometimes do not feel its grinding crush. The work of the great Potter never stops, though we may not be able to discern whether we are raw clay from the pit, or pressed with His forming hand upon the wheel, or set apart in the furnace of probation. But whether we strive with and answer Him, whether we greet and yield to His touch, whether we learn or

not, He ever teaches. Let us hold fast to this fact, and then the example of godly life in Jesus will show that we are intended for victory through decay, opposition, and death. His progress may lighten up ours and cheer the pains of growth. To the Christian it is always growth. There is no descent from the middle periods of life, but merely a shifting of the lesson. The former book is shut, the next is set before us. The prime of a man's life is never reached here. The learning of obedience by Jesus was not finished till the last. He was obedient unto death.

And the history of His awful life-long learning teaches us how to take His Father's lessons now. If we would grow by those trials, not always necessarily bitter, which He sends or lays upon us, we must look unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith—not a faith peculiar to Himself, but ours too.

We all have to learn, specially when we have left school. To whom do we apply for wisdom? To whom do we look up as a teacher? To whom do we refer the facts

which we meet with? Do we apply to masters, philosophers, divines, books, systems of science, morality, and religion? We cannot help it. We must use these men and things. But is there no One behind them all, One from whom alone they receive that which makes them true, One with whom we are in intimate spiritual communication whilst we read, mark, and inwardly digest the various lessons set us in the great university of the world? Yes, there is such a One: God Himself. And unless we learn with an eye to Him and His laws, no study, no experience, no toil will enable us to lead the highest life. The best human teaching is but poor food unless it be leavened with the Spirit of the Lord. The most diligent application to the store of human wisdom is, when viewed in reference to our greatest capacity, but lost labour unless it be accompanied by a receptive attitude towards the source of all knowledge and light, i. e., in other words, by that which is the Spirit of prayer.

We may take Jesus as an example here.

How did He meet the successive stages of His temptation, whether it may have been to tire of subjection to His parents, or to yield to the solitary devil of ambition, or to accept the vulgar coronation by the multitude, or to shrink from the scowls and murmurs of the religious world, or to draw back from the tremendous task of choosing Apostles and beginning the construction of a Church, or to put aside the last cup of agony and shame?

What did He use, so that each of these steps in His most holy life, and many more, never left Him cast down? How did He come out still pure from every temptation, never losing ground in His human growth, ever tempted on all points like as we are, with offers of vain glory or prospect of suffering, and yet remain without sin?

By means which we have: by prayer of all kinds. He turned to God when assaulted in the wilderness. He spent a whole night in prayer before He chose the twelve. He went apart into a mountain to pray when the people wanted to take Him by force and

make Him a king. He prayed the more earnestly when His sweat was as it were great drops of blood, and the shadow of the cross fell close and dark upon His soul.

These instances may suffice. He continually prayed, and that not merely for others, but also for Himself. He referred every thing that He did to His Father's will, from the day that He was found among the doctors in the Temple to the hour in which He bowed His head and gave up the ghost on Calvary. Here He is to us an ensample of godly life in learning. Our trials are not only sanctified, but increase our wisdom and obedience, through prayer. They may seem small and vulgar in the light of those which Jesus underwent, but we can meet and use them only in His way if we are to grow towards the measure of the stature of Christ. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. Whatever it is that crosses us, whatever we are called to do, whatever we are set to learn, prayer alone enables us to take in the lessons of God; for prayer is the

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process by which we consciously expose our spirits to the influence of the Great Spirit. We do not ask to change the course or character of that, but we seek to realize intelligent communion with the power which creates and administers all the laws of life.

If we pray aright, it is not we that work, but God that worketh in us. Without the spirit of prayer, our learning and our doing are both vain. With prayer, our lessons, tasks, and temptations are made by God to fit us for that perfect balance and repose of obedience which is the mark of heaven, but which never left Him who learned by the things which He suffered, and yet, in the full career and storm of His sorrowful life, could say, as He still says to such as us, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

THE MISSION OF THE PERFECT MAN.

ALL men have some mission, aim, desire, or purpose in life. It may be high, it may be low. It may be clear, it may be vague, but it must exist in every one that is not an irresponsible lunatic or idiot. The prodigal has a desire to see what he calls life, the merchant to amass a fortune, the philosopher to investigate facts, sift evidence, and discover principles, the statesman to carry out a policy, the legislator to construct or consolidate laws, the labourer to earn bread for his family. Take any class, any vocation among men, and we shall find that with more or less interest and perservance every man follows or proposes to himself some object in life. Solomon says that even the soul of the sluggard desireth, though he hath nothing.

This mark of humanity is borne by Jesus. And in Him, in the Perfect Man, we may naturally look for that which should be the true aim of all the children of God. There can be none lower, none other worthy of the Christian, but that of the Master Himself.

But it must be something which will fit every honest calling. It must be something which will not interfere with any lawful business. It must not draw away our hands from work, and substitute desire, however lofty, for the actual common labour of life. It must be such as inspires that labour, and is never out of season or place. How is Jesus an ensample of godly life to us in this matter?

First, He came to do the will of God. His salvation of the world itself was the result of that desire. He came to please, not man, but God. As He told the people that the first and great commandment was that they should love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their strength, and with all their mind, so He aimed Himself. This alone makes the yoke of life easy, and the

burden of the cross light. This transmutes toil into duty, and the humblest drudge into a fellow-worker with the Lord. This does more than any thing else to free us from the fever of expectation and the bitterness of failure. If we take the service of God as our aim, we look beyond all the changes and chances of this mortal life, and, as our love to God remains firm, every thing works together for our good. For then "our good" is not by any means what the world calls success or happiness, but a better knowledge of and deeper trust in God Himself.

Thus we learn from Jesus that the one chief aim of a man's life is to serve the Lord. Jesus had none higher, and we can have none lower. And it is one which may be followed whatever our calling, provided that our calling be honest. This condition has unhappily to be remembered, since in a state of highly forced and luxurious society a man's business, that by which he earns his bread, may be essentially vile. In this case, however, the significant term "calling" is prostituted. We

might rather say that the aim of Jesus is a true test of our calling itself. If that be such as we cannot in our conscience ask a blessing upon, it is unworthy of man. And as this great principle tries our business whether it be good or bad, so it sanctifies every lawful business. It keeps our heart in heaven while our hands are upon earth. It provides that which every true man admires or longs for, i. e. a noble motive. It keeps up the interest of life. Those who set themselves to serve God in their vocation have a career before them which stretches onwards with bright and boundless hope. They are in the way of everlasting life, and the air grows more full of cheer, and the eternal gates show clearer to the eye as they travel onwards in the kingdom of heaven. They are strangers and pilgrims, but they sing upon the road; for it is marked with the footprints of Jesus. He came as the great exemplar and august performer of duty in its highest, holiest flight. Lo! I come to do Thy will, O God. That was the work of His life, and to do our work because it is

God's will that we should do it, is the highest aim of which we are capable, for it was the aim of the Perfect Man.

Beside this chief lesson about the aim of life, which we learn from the example of Jesus, there are others so general as to suit all men, whatever their place, whatever their lawful business. One, the chief, may be gathered from a saying of Jesus which He uttered at the crisis of His life, when He stood at the bar from which He was removed to the cross. At that awful hour, when He was upon His great trial, when the crowd had already met which accompanied Him to Calvary, when He was ready to look back upon His course and commend His spirit into the hands of God, when He was left alone, and only His Father was with Him, He said, "For this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

These memorable words enable us to apprehend still further the mission of the Perfect Man. They help us to apprehend the sense in which every one is called to bear witness unto

the truth. Jesus did not so much propound a set scheme of revelation which He substituted for that which then prevailed, as bear witness unto truth, truth in all things, reaching up to the counsels of God and down to the ways of man.

The world is darkened by deceit. In the words of Scripture, the great enemy of mankind is the Deceiver, the Father of Lies. We are cursed by ignorance, cunning, and distrust. If we look at the various familiar statements which set forth the mission of the Perfect Man, we shall find that they directly or indirectly can be all referred to this one saying of His, that He came into the world that He should bear witness unto the truth. He tells His disciples that they shall know the truth, and that the truth shall make them free. He prays to God to sanctify them through His truth. He is the true light. He is the destroyer of the works of the devil, that is, of lies. He manifests the love of God; i. e. He makes known the truth about God, that He is our Father, that He is love. His whole teaching

goes to show that, as we put it in our daily prayers, "in the knowledge" of God "standeth our eternal life."

I will not string together texts which my readers can find for themselves, but remind them that the whole work of Jesus is called in general terms a Revelation. Thus the mission of Jesus, or rather a chief way in which He fulfilled it, was to bear witness unto the truth about God, about Himself, and about us.

Before we look further into this, however, we must bear in mind that truthfulness is not only required of a follower of Jesus, as a thing which is imperatively demanded when we commit ourselves to Him, but without some real measure of it we cannot become His disciples, we cannot learn of Him. He that is of the truth, said Jesus, heareth My words. There is, as it were, a truthfulness antecedent to Christianity itself. The Spirit of Christ cannot mingle with and quicken towards perfection the spirit of a man whose principles are in any wise insincere. The unreal, the affected, the unfair have not the elementary material out of

which to make a member of perfect manhood. It is not that they pervert and misapply the teaching of the Christ, but they cannot receive it. It is not that their hopes of progress are endangered by an original want of truthfulness, but without it they cannot begin. It may be indeed that some strong word, some striking event, some piercing alarm may so impress an insincere man that he has another action set up in him. A shock may bring him to a sense of reality; and thus, since the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God, the new-born truthfulness in him is not antecedent to the working of that power which is the essence of Christianity, but the direct teaching of Christ is incapable of affecting him unless he be sincere.

This is more or less illustrated in the relation between the preaching of John the Baptist and that of Christ. John startled men. He made them confess their sins. He harrowed them into repentance; and then, but not till then, were they in a state to learn of the Christ, and receive what he had to tell

them of truth. Then, according to the amount of sincerity generated in them, they were prepared for that which Christ tells us was the mission of His life.

I have already remarked that the saying of Jesus in the judgment-hall is very broad. When viewed in connexion with His promise to the disciples that He would send them a Spirit who should guide them into all truth, it does not encourage the desire we have to be content with some "plan," as it is called, of salvation. Jesus does not set before us a compact, definite "scheme" of Christianity, wholly polished and round, such as we may accept, explain, and comprehend with fulness, and when we have mastered it, assume that we know every thing that man can know. Nor are we encouraged by Him to expect that such a scheme can be constructed by the Church out of the materials with which it is provided in His words and works, so that although the plan was not arranged and fixed in its details when He departed from the world, it was afterwards wholly and minutely discovered and

set down by holy men aided by the Holy Ghost. On the contrary, it would seem that while we accept the facts which have been already revealed to us, we should keep our minds open to receive more, and ever expect to apprehend what we have received more fully. We must not, like Pilate, sneer or sigh at the thought of the knowledge of truth being possible, nor, like the high priests, make up our minds that we know the law of God perfectly, and impute blasphemy to any one who questions the conclusions we have come to from the Divine facts which have been already revealed. It is not to be supposed that a man can take in all the truth at once, or that, considering the progress of science and criticism, the conclusions of which have from age to age affected the opinions of the Church, he is provided with a plan which may be safely adhered to in every phase and detail, however much collateral discoveries may seem to qualify its acceptance in some points. The Church once believed sincerely that the sun moved round the earth, and resented the

denial of this supposed fact on religious grounds, as endangering the integrity and accuracy of its doctrine.

Still, though we are not yet guided into all truth, we may be certain that if we desire to learn, our ignorance shall not be cast in our teeth, but the great Teacher will go on teaching us. He has many things to say unto us which we cannot bear now. But he that is of the truth, i. e. is willing to receive it, he shall hear, he shall be guided by the Spirit which speaks in the Church, and in the soul. And when that Spirit ceases to guide, then, and then only, shall we cease to learn. The variety of opinions held by sincere Christians throughout the world about the facts of revelation, is thus far from being a matter for alarm or regret.

It is a providential hindrance to the greatest of all errors, viz. that we have learnt the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about God and man. While we try to learn of God through the Church our individual business is clearly to act up to what we be-

lieve, to follow the light we have, and neither to bow to that which we doubt in our own conscience—for whatsoever is not of faith is sin—nor condemn another who honestly differs from ourselves in his opinions, for to his own Master he standeth or falleth.

This does not interfere with the laws which regulate a man's connexion with any particular branch of the Catholic Church or Christian sect. If he cannot accept the essential facts which are held by that body, he must, as an honest man, either leave it, or, supposing that to be forbidden, take the consequences, whatever they may be, of refusal to conform.

The necessity which lies upon us to act up to such light as we receive rather supports the great aim of the mission of Jesus to bear witness unto the truth. Towards that, by different paths it may be, and seeing different sides of what they meet by the way, both Churches and souls travel until the day comes when we shall know as we are known, when errors are corrected, each one's measure of faith accepted, and out of the various folds, all

form one flock under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Meanwhile, really to Him who came to bear witness unto the truth, to Him who is the Head of the Universal Church, every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, must look up. All are bound to help one another, but each draws life from the Head Himself; that Head whose words he has a right to hear, to whom he has a right to address himself for comfort and guidance, unhindered, just as the blind beggar, who cried aloud to Jesus, though those about the Lord bid him hold his peace; just as the poor Canaanitish woman whom the very disciples wanted to send away because she cried after them, but to whom Jesus, seeing her earnestness, said, in the fulness of His liberality, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

In the few foregoing passages I may seem to have swerved from the line of thought which treats of Jesus as an example. I have, however, only paused to try to fix in the reader's mind the fact that one chief way in

which He fulfils His mission is to bear witness unto the truth, and to notice the wide sense in which this must necessarily be understood. So wide is it, so applicable to every man, that each one of us may have the same purpose himself. Each man in his measure and place must aim at truth in all that he says and does. The way in which the Perfect Man fulfilled His mission must be, in this respect, the way in which all men fulfil theirs. This applies with freshest force to the leaders among men; to the divine, to the statesman, to the lawyer, to the man of science, of commerce. They must strive against the selfishness of party, the fear of offence, the natural indolence which tempts them to rest satisfied with half truths, hastily formed theories, or imperfect evidence. They above all, being trusted, must be ready to listen to objections and importunate inquiries. They must be ready, not only to give good reasons for the faith that is in them, but to sift the honest doubts which are thrown upon the conclusions at which they have themselves

arrived; whether in theology, politics, or science. They must show themselves to be trustworthy teachers, not by the loudness of their anathemas, but by their willingness to learn; for he who professes that he cannot be taught is beyond all men the most unfit to teach.

And what applies to the highest among us applies equally to the lowest. The way in which the Perfect Man fulfilled His mission calls for a life of truthfulness in all. No one is excluded by his position or power, however humble and small, from taking this aim. Whatever we are, we may be true.

There is no one who is not responsible both to God and man. It may seem a small matter to the public whether one who occupies a very inferior position is true, i. e. can be trusted or not. His work is sharply looked after, and if he is dishonest he suffers. His petty lie or fraud does not sensibly check the strong machinery of the world, which flings him aside and goes grinding on without thinking him or his untruthfulness worth notice. It is his concern, it cannot affect society enough to

draw from it either punishment or censure. But the man is responsible to God, and his offence recoils heavily upon himself. What is that to us? said the chief priests to Judas—Judas the mere contemptible traitor, sometime the associate, now the betrayer of One who was reckoned as a blasphemer—What is that to us? See thou to that. So the meanest who departs from the truth must see to his falsehood. And it damns him, though the world cares no more for his damnation than the crowd does for the death of the worm which is crushed upon the gravel beneath its feet.

Whatever we are, let us know that in serving God our first aim must be truth, to learn it by all means, to follow it, to do it, to speak it. Sometimes this love of truth breeds the hero and wins the admiration of mankind. But it must animate the unapplauded drudge, unless, though a man, he foregoes the privilege of humanity, i. e. membership with Christ, sonship of God, and inheritance of the kingdom of heaven.

God sees him in his lonely toil : He without the will of whom not a sparrow falls to the ground can pour into that drudge's soul such a sense of nearness to Him who is the Truth, as will bring down the light of heaven itself upon his task, refining his dull toil into Divine duty ; and will comfort him at last when he lays down his hand-worn tools, and the angel comes to lead him from this troublesome world into the closer presence of Him who is the life of the worker and the rest of the weary.

But do not let us think that we can easily take Jesus as an example in fulfilling our mission with truth. A vein of terrible earnestness runs throughout His teaching, not as a mere accompanying symptom of what He suffered when tempted by the Deceiver, but as if He were careful to show men the cost of becoming His disciples.

He taught no carpet Gospel. "If any man will come after Me," He cried, "let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." The pains He took lest any one should follow Him blindly, appear in many short stern words

at which we, who hear so much about the sweetness of Jesus, are sometimes surprised. When one came running and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" we are told that Jesus beholding him loved him. But He said, "Sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and come and take up the cross and follow Me." And the man who had great possessions, shrank from the thought of exchanging them for the dim and distant treasures of heaven, and went away grieved. What a contrast is this to the common reception of the wealthy man now! How tenderly careful we are not to give him umbrage! How much the cause of the Church is honoured by his patronage or adherence! How cautious is the poor minister of Christ lest he should unwittingly scare "my Lord" away, and lose a rich supporter!

Or it may be that the candidate for discipleship is a poor man. Then we are anxious for higher, but still questionable reasons, to avoid putting any severe test to his proposals.

Often we handle him too gently, and let him commit himself before we venture to show him the rough side of the cross.

But Jesus was no diplomatist. He never shielded Himself, and never made things smooth to possible disciples, were they great or small. There is apparently a want of what we, in our modern delicacy, call tact and consideration, in His way of calling them to His work. He bids the clerk in the midst of his accounts, the simple fishermen busy about their boat, rise up and forsake all, on the instant, to follow Him. He gives them no time to set their affairs in order. One pleaded, Lord I will follow Thee, but let me first go and bury my father. But Jesus replies, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their dead." Another prays, "Let me first bid them farewell which are at home at my house;" and receives the answer, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God."

It may indeed be questioned whether a short sharp demand for immediate self-denial

is not now, as ever, the most attractive that can be made, if he who makes it be obviously and utterly devoted to the cause which he promotes. Take a modern example. The man who seeks to reclaim the drunkard gets more to follow him when he insists on total abstinence than when he preaches temperance. And yet in religion the exacting severity of Jesus startles us who see so much elastic and accommodating Christianity. We piece the world and the Church together with neatness and tact. Our Gospel has no ragged edge. We tear nothing asunder. We divide our duties according to our convenience and leisure. We seek the peace, but hide the sword of the faith. We trim the thorns of the roses of salvation. We polish and scent the cross.

But I am sure that no one can honestly read the many records of the severity of Jesus without perceiving that it is no easy and pleasant matter to follow Him, as He would be followed. He gives us rest only by laying a yoke upon our necks. He enables us to bear our burden by adding His own. His

service is light only because those who serve with Him endure heaviness by leaning upon God. We must not be deceived by His command that we should love our neighbour as ourselves, since He saved not Himself.

Thus we may conclude that His mission, the mission of the Perfect Man—which must be ours too—involves a far profounder devotion to the truth, and a ruder strife to seek and show it in our lives than that which marks the personal religion of many Christians now.

The great Deceiver, the Spirit of Lies, whose works Jesus came to destroy, gets the better of all those who do not resist him in their Master's Spirit. If we would take Him as an ensample of godly life in this matter, we must make up our minds to a sharp and daily strife for truthfulness, whether it be in the conduct of our opinions or the discharge of our duty. Without this endeavour to keep our conscience clear, it will not reflect the light of the Lord, which is given us from on high to shine before men upon earth, that they may see our good works—ours, so called,

but really His—and glorify, not us, but our Father which is in heaven.

This brings us to another phase of the thought we are following. Christians are not called to seek and show the truth after a cold and merely scientific fashion. Their search for and setting forth of it must glow with the desire of Jesus. His Spirit must touch their souls, or they will only burden themselves with dry facts, and crawl heavily upon the ground, instead of ascending up in heart and mind whither He has gone before, and growing in the knowledge of God Himself. We may flatter ourselves that we are seeking truth while we are neither moved by the Spirit of God, nor desirous of His glory. I do not mean that every man who uses the Spirit of God and desires His glory would define his purpose, to himself or to others, in these words. They have been so pointedly adopted into the language of a class which is supposed to be exclusively religious, that many sincere men who are unselfishly in pursuit of truth shrink from expressing themselves thus. But

the fact remains, that real devotion to truth will be unsullied by any thing which degrades a man morally.

There is such a thing as holding truth in unrighteousness. The devil himself is represented as promising knowledge, "Ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil." The peculiarity of the Christian is, that he learns in the Spirit of Jesus the Perfect Man. He aims at doing the will of God, not merely at knowing about the way in which He works. The calling of the Christian is followed, not by gathering facts and establishing logical conclusions, but by bearing witness unto truthfulness in his life, and if need be unto the death. By his teachable spirit and self-denying obedience he honours no mere system of logic, science, morality, or even religion, but God Himself, who is the Master of his school and the aim of his life.

THE WORK OF THE PERFECT MAN.

IT is not enough for a man to have a good education and high aims. He is expected to work. There are people who study much and dream nobly, but do nothing.

And if we want to know what true work is, and how it should be done, we must look to the Perfect Man. Whatever our calling we must learn to follow it after the fashion and in the Spirit of Jesus, or we shall surely follow it amiss.

His call to His disciples was personal and exacting. They were not bidden to examine new forms of belief, or to study a fresh creed, so much as to work. Nay, their power to accept any revelation was made to depend upon this: "If any man will do His will, he

shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." "This do," said Jesus to the well instructed scribe, "and thou shalt live."

And it is in the deeds of Jesus, and the way in which He did them, that we may see the best interpretation of His words. It will be our next object, therefore, to inquire, from the life of the Perfect Man, somewhat about true Christian work.

Let us look first at what we may call the social ministry of Jesus, at that which we understand by the words, "He went about doing good." This kind of work was very real. We see Jesus walking dust-footed on the road. We see Him, thronged by commonplace suppliants, each urging his own petition or complaint, the centre of a clamorous crowd.

We can thus perceive how trying His work was, as wanting sympathy in its aim. Any one who has had to do with those who are unable or unwilling to see the inner meaning or final purpose of the work in hand can thus appreciate, in some measure, the exhaustive loneliness of the work of Jesus.

To take an illustration from that which we eminently associate with the demands which were made upon Him, any one who has had much to do with the relief of destitution knows how hard it is to keep his sympathy fresh, to reject the suggestions of sheer unthinking good-nature, and the harsh criticisms of the cynic, and yet to go on listening to the monotonous importunity of the poor with discrimination and gentleness. Thus he can form some idea of part of the work of Jesus. He received all with a delicate perception of which we have many hints in the record of His ministry. He knew, indeed, when to rebuff the people. "Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracle, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." But He could detect the feeblest pulse of faith even in a mob. "Master," said His disciples, "the multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me?" His ear caught the tone of the blind beggar's cry among the noises of a moving crowd.

Thus we should strive to follow Jesus, not

only in yielding to the spirit of compassion for our fellows, but in keeping alive that tenderness of heart which prevents our natural kindness from growing stale and rough. It is difficult to avoid becoming harsh in our dealings with poor, uninteresting people, and no one can avoid it unless he takes the golden rule of Jesus, "I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me," as the motive of his charity and ministration. Let him set himself, as his first object, not so much to relieve the distress of men, as to serve the Lord, and then his philanthropy will be Divine. His touch will be tender where it ought to be tender, and yet he will be severe where he ought to be severe. Our duty towards God comes before our duty towards our neighbour: Thus, and thus only, can we rightly follow Jesus in doing good. Unless our prayer is like His, "not My will but Thine be done," our benevolence will become degraded, and we shall act upon lower and lower motives in dealing with the poor and the afflicted. We shall grow either formal and harsh, or sentimental. We

shall either be provoked at the meannesses of those we help, or help them injudiciously. We shall lose the faculty of discrimination, and the charm of sympathy, which is never pure and wholesome unless we approach the sufferer from higher ground than that on which he stands himself. We must be on the bank if we are to help our neighbour out of the Slough of Despond; and if the blind lead the blind, however much he may love him, both shall fall into the ditch. When, therefore, we try to relieve men let us keep on God's side, and then we shall neither be put out by the vexatious misapprehensions which we are sure to meet with, nor yield to a spirit of loose goodness when we are called on to show a righteous severity.

We must, however, recollect that the godliest ministrations may be very wearisome. We have many hints of the effect which was produced upon Jesus by the strain of body and mind which He underwent in going about and doing good. He withdrew from the multitude to pray. He wept with those who mourned

for Lazarus, not to show His sympathy with them, but because He could not help it. After teaching the people, He dropped asleep on the rowers' cushion in the Galilæan ferry-boat. I suppose, seeing how weary He was, that they unstrapped it from the bench and placed it under His head; and there He slept, through the noise of the oars and the crash of the waves under the prow. He sat down at the wayside, while His disciples went into the city to buy meat. Faint and thirsty with the length of the road, and the glare of the sun, for it was noon, He waited at the brink of the deep cool well, ready to cry to the first comer, "Give Me to drink." It may not be significant of that weakness which we are noticing, but He seems seldom to have stood up to preach.

Beside the exhaustion thus indicated, He was exposed to that which comes from a constant attitude of defence. He was obliged to be always on guard. Cunning clever sceptics were continually seeking to entangle Him in His talk. But He never failed to foil them, however subtle and sudden their assaults. No

man was able to answer Him a word, until at last this class of opponents durst ask Him no more questions.

We may thus in some measure realize the severity of His common work. He was always full strung, as it were, and exposed to close personal encounter with difficulties which tried the powers of His body and mind with exhausting effect.

This teaches us that Christian work is real, and must be done at first hand, whether it be physical or mental. There must be no evasion of responsibility. The head of an institution or department may delegate some duties to others, but he must never relax his own interest and supervision. Mere routine work is impossible to the man who has the Spirit of Christ. He cannot leave the machinery to revolve of itself, but ever supplements and inspires it with a reserve of wakeful assiduity. We cannot serve the Lord or do our duty aright, as those who are related to the Perfect Man, without sweat of brow or brain.

In looking to Jesus as an example in godly

work we may also remark that His was never ostentatious. He did not strain Himself to set an example. No one can do that without some taint of affectation. Jesus did His Father's will, and left the example to be seen of itself. There was none of that spirit about Him which so often jars painfully with our good taste in the proceedings of the religious person and philanthropist. He was no posture-master of Christianity. He often shrank from such a display of His power as we, perhaps, should have thought desirable. His brethren in Galilee noticed this: "Depart hence," they said, "and go into Judæa that Thy disciples also may see the works that Thou doest. If Thou do these things show Thyself to the world."

Moreover He was calm. There was a quietness in His way of doing good which may teach all earnest people a lesson. There was no haste about His works.

It is often hard for an eager, enthusiastic man to avoid hurry. But this is eminently un-Christlike. At times, indeed, we can imagine

the eye of Jesus to have kindled with holy indignation, as when He looked round about Him with anger; or His voice to have risen into something like a chant of condemnation, as when He heaped upon the "Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites" His reiterated utterances of woe. But He was never in a hurry. He resented the interference of those who would have hastened on the performance of His deeds before they were ripe. "My time," He said, with something like a touch of Divine irony, "is not yet come. Yours is alway ready."

Again, Jesus was no special patron of poor people and working-men. He came to seek and to save that which was lost, whether in the house of the Chief Pharisee or in the highways and hedges. His works of mercy were done for the rich as well as for the poor. It is said of Him that He healed all that had need of healing, but they included the ruler's daughter and the nobleman's son. He gave bread to the people in the wilderness, but He gave wine to the wedding guests. When the

disciples said, "This ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor," He checked that false spirit of charity which would turn the generous into mere relieving officers, and the work of the true lover of Christ into the distribution of dole.

We may learn from His example here. The vexatious attempts at imposition which a liberal man is ever exposed to, sometimes drive us to the extreme of caution and economy in our almsgiving and the like. From a searching investigation of the cases of applicants for relief, which is right enough, we often go on to grudge any gift except it be made to those who are distinctly proved to be poor; or we give only such things as we think are severely useful. We concern ourselves with the substantial repairs of humanity to the exclusion of the decorative, and so may miss much of the beauty of holiness.

But the works of Jesus teach us that true Christian charity is by no means to be shown to the poor alone, in the conventional sense

which we give to the word "poor." His very first miracle proves that there was an atmosphere of kindness to His deeds. He loved men, He did not patronize them.

There is another phase of the example of Jesus as a worker which is sometimes overlooked. His works were neither ecclesiastical nor secular. They were not, in the modern sense of the word, ecclesiastical. I do not refer to His life at Nazareth, though there is something in the thought of the hand of Jesus being hard with the tool which might sanctify the whole work of the craftsman. Nor do I refer to His sympathy with the heretical Samaritan and heathen woman and Gentile infantry officer, for He did not sympathize with them as heretics or Gentiles or heathens, but as those who, in spite of these hindrances, had faith in God.

I refer rather to the light which He shed upon the nature of Christian work and true religion. Godliness is by no means invariably identical with that which men now call religion. Religion is the outward sign of our

devotion to God, and a support to that devotion. It is only a means towards an end, one means among others towards realizing the aim of true human life, viz. the serving of the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, and promoting works of truth, mercy, justice, and love. But by religion many men now understand the expression of theological opinions, and the performance of Divine worship in the church, and it is a common human tendency to make these ecclesiastical observances the chief sign of communion with and devotion to God. The act of prayer is exalted above the use of that Spirit for which we profess to pray.

The old Prophets prophesied against this fault. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me?" saith the Lord by Isaiah. "I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts. Bring no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination unto Me. The new moons and Sabbaths, I cannot away with. Your appointed feasts My soul hateth. They are a trouble unto

Me, I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hand I will hide mine eyes from you. Yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

And as it was in the beginning of Isaiah, the first in order of the greater Prophets in our Bible, so is it in the lesser. It was Micah who cried, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings? Will the Lord be pleased with ten thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

This is conspicuously the strain of the Prophets by whom God spake, at sundry times and in divers manners, unto the Fathers.

And if we look into later history, we can

detect the same spirit at work in the Christian Church as marred the Jewish. We sometimes see religion made to consist mainly of ecclesiastical performances and opinions, whereas these things are valueless unless they help to promote judgment, mercy, and truth among men.

Now between the history of the Jewish and that of the Christian Church stands the figure of Jesus; and to Him we must look for the marks of the kingdom of heaven, the character of true godliness. What did He reply to John the Baptist, who sent to inquire whether He were the Christ or not? "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them."

I think that no candid mind can help admitting that these words are a protest against that common fault which is seen in the tendency to prize the prayer above the performance, and the hearing of the word of God above the doing of His will.

What we call "Divine" worship ceases to be Divine when it is offered for its own sake alone, or under an impression that, *per se*, it is gratifying to God. Prayers and the like are chief means whereby we draw near to Him, in order to receive His Spirit for our use in life. A sober man eats and drinks that he may live, and have strength to do his work. Epicures make eating and drinking the chief delight and occupation of their lives. So there is a spiritual gluttony, an excessive fondness for devotional sensations, which is accompanied by an idle, useless life. And spiritual sensationists are often feeble in mind, just as gluttons and drunkards are weak in body.

Now Jesus is our best example in these matters. He prayed as none of us pray, and yet He prayed with a purpose. It may be seen in the Gospel history how His periods of retirement for prolonged prayer were followed by some special work. He worked as none of us work, and yet there is, so to speak, a freshness, an absence of the ecclesiastical tone about what he did, which contrasts itself with

the air of clerical pedantry and theological preciseness which sometimes cramps the work and style of religious persons in our own day. We may indeed see in the Gospels that His way of working continually jarred with the stiff sense of propriety which characterized the priests and churchmen of His time. He teaches us the lesson which was neglected by the Jewish Church, and is occasionally forgotten in our own, that worship is only a means towards work, that the tree is known by its fruits, that though we cannot serve God aright without prayer, yet that the performance and enjoyment of Divine worship in the Church is idle unless it leads to a sincere and healthy discharge of our duty in the world.

But, on the other hand, it is a radically fatal mistake to call the works of Jesus anywise secular, in the modern sense of the word. When He healed the sick, we must not suppose that He considered pain and physical weakness to be the chief ills of humanity. He did not free His disciples from these things. He made no account of pain Himself. He bade

His followers pluck out the right eye rather than let it become a gate for the entrance of sin. He left a heritage of suffering to His Church. And in these delicate days, when the "humanitarian" faints at the sight of blood, and cries out at death in the battle-field as the great evil of war, it is well to fix in our minds the fact that Jesus looked not so much at the suffering itself, as at the sin of which it was a sign. Better die in righteous war than grow fat in godless peace. The men who wince at pain, and mourn over death as in itself necessarily evil, are the descendants of those who said, "If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God: let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him." The cross is the emblem of the Christian faith; and the cross means pain, death if need be, rather than a forsaking of the will of God.

If, therefore, we would follow Jesus in godly work, we must strive more against the sin than the suffering which it produces. The healing of the body is a small thing without the

healing of the soul. We must aim at the fault itself, not the result of it alone. Take an illustration from the treatment of an epidemic, say cholera : when that prevails it is not enough to run about with physic, though that may be needful in an extremity ; but the true sanitary reformer looks at the causes of the pestilence, the bad water, bad air, intemperance and uncleanness of the people. The prevalence of the disease is a sign of these things, and he looks beyond the disease to that deeper evil which it indicates. He sees, and he tries to make other people see, the proof of a departure from the laws of health. Thus a pestilence which sweeps away a crowd of weak bodies may be a blessing, if it sets men to perceive how the human constitution may be injured by causes which are capable of removal.

And in so working the sanitary reformer follows the principle of the work of Jesus. He aimed at sin, the source of suffering, in His healing of the sick. But where suffering promoted godliness He neither shrank from it Himself nor removed it from others.

There is the more reason to remember this now that there is a common disposition to lose sight of the spiritual character of Christian work. The final aim of Jesus was the service of God, not the ease of men; the raising of the soul, not the healing of the body. His works were signs, intended to lead men's minds upwards, not acts for the satisfaction of their lower desires. He upbraided the multitude whom He fed, because they did not see the finger of God in their relief.

It is possible, however, to overdo this. There is a characteristic of some modern Christian work which is thus sometimes painfully obtrusive. There are persons who can never help a man, especially a poor man, without giving him some advice about his soul. Some, indeed, venture on this only with the poor, as if they were necessarily farthest from the kingdom of heaven. They are either afraid to say to their equals or superiors in rank what they say to a sick labourer, or they conceive that the gift of some money or food buys a right to add

a few words about religion. They give a ticket and a tract to the pauper, at a venture, not knowing whether he is good or bad. They bow and smile when "my Lord" shakes hands with them, though they may know him to be one to whom godly advice might be useful, though not acceptable.

I do not, of course, mean to imply that they are bound to take upon themselves the office of public censors, either of rich or poor. I only protest against a one-sided caricature of the Christian rule, that in our work and conversation we should look more to God's honour than human convenience and courtesy.

Our example, Jesus, the Perfect Man, though He came, and openly professed that He came, to do God's will, was frequently content to perform a good deed, and let the good deed speak for itself. Nay, when He spake of God, it was often rather when He received, than when He conferred an obligation. He taught the Samaritan woman, whom He asked to give Him drink. He rebuked Simon the Pharisee when He sat at his

table. But it is remarkable that in many cases He did a kindness, and then left those whom He helped to learn the lesson which it might teach them. When He healed a leper He did not moralize on the analogy between leprosy and sin. When He raised the ruler's daughter He commanded that something should be given her to eat. When He cured the impotent man by the pool of Bethesda it was not till afterwards, when He found him in the temple, that He said unto him, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

There was in Him a conspicuous absence of that immediate accompaniment of pious language to good deeds which sometimes characterizes the religious philanthropist. In this we may learn from Jesus. If the love of God be warm in our hearts, it will reveal itself without our always talking about the connexion between the human and Divine, or we shall find occasion to show it without risking the danger of casting pearls before swine, and exposing it to needless contempt. We may thus learn

from the religious work of Jesus. We may realize the aim of all religion. We should think more of this than of the detail of its form. Our work is to serve God ; to promote in ourselves, and therefore necessarily in others, the love of truth, justice, and mercy. But if we stop to speculate too much on the forms of our religion, we are like workmen who should spend so much labour on the sharpening of their tools as to have no time in which to use them. Or if we think our religion a separate thing, rather than one whose spirit should enter into the whole duty of man, and be radically joined and interwoven with all true work, we are like those jealous members of a craft who prize the exclusiveness of their trade, above the good results which skilled labour bestows on the community.

Again, the work of Jesus was not done in religious seclusion. Those who, however sincerely, seek to realize the perfection of Christian ministry by withdrawing themselves from this busy world, and carrying on their processes behind the hedge of artificial exclu-

siveness, should recollect that their professed Exemplar did not issue His ministrations from any sequestered fortress of piety. He was not a cloistered worker. He did not shrink from meeting the waves of this troublesome world. He built no haven of holiness, from the shelter of which He might send forth His mandates, and give an air of central mystery to the work of his followers. He went about doing good. He prayed for His disciples, not that His Father should take them out of the world, but that He should keep them from the evil.

There is another phase of the work of Jesus which seems distinct, and about which I must here make a few remarks. He wrought miracles. How may we take Him as an example in this? I will not inquire into that wonderful speech of Jesus to His disciples, "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to My Father." I will not speculate on the reserve of power which may be within the reach of those who love and pray mightily, but I will notice several lessons which may be learnt from the character of His miracles.

They are, among other things, a protest against that sentimental selfishness which cannot bear the sight of distress, and relieves it with a large and injudicious hand. All power, we read, belonged to our Lord in heaven and in earth; but He never, so to speak, overdid His kindness. He helped people to help themselves. He restored sight to the blind, strength to the lame, speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, health to the sick. He put them in the way of eating their bread by the sweat of their brow. By no miracle or act did He provide the beggar with money, or the sound with extraordinary powers. He enabled none to hurry on the stages of growth, or suddenly alter the state of life to which they were called. He made no paupers into kings, nor huts into palaces.

In this His wonderful works were wholly unlike the prodigies of romance. The children playing in the market-place people their supernatural world with good genii and fairies, whose magic wand changes the peasant into a prince. But the miracles of the kingdom of

heaven raise no one above his place. If he has fallen out of the ranks, he is put back to fight his way, and no more. The only recorded instances of the production of any thing like superabundance by Jesus are in the changing of water into wine, the feeding of the multitude, and the miraculous draught of fishes. In the first of these we hear nothing of the application of the excess. In the second the twelve apostles were each furnished with a basket of broken meat. In the last the fishermen were immediately called away from their abundance to follow the Master who bestowed it. The only wonderful work recorded to have been wrought by Him to produce money, and that a single coin, was to pay the dues of the temple, which the zealous Peter had promised in his Master's name.

This economy of power is a great lesson to us. It checks the idle longing for extraordinary help which characterizes the indolent enthusiast, and it brings even the miracles of Jesus within the circle of our works. It shows that in our greatest, in our most ambi-

tious efforts, we must not aim at any thing out of ordinary natural life. It shows the highest works to be restorative. We may strive to deliver others from the burdens and hindrances of humanity, but no man may seek either for himself or for his fellow any unique eminence above the rest. He may reach it, but it must not be his object. He may reach it in time, but he will probably overbalance himself if he tries to stretch himself up to it at once. The works of Christ are in the main not such as to do away with the need of wholesome use and growth. The man who was cured of his blindness rejoiced in the fact that when he saw he had no power to see more than others. The lame man who was healed leaped in the temple from sheer delight at the consciousness of common strength, but that was all.

True Christian work—ay, at its highest flight, when done by Jesus Himself—need not daunt us in learning from Him what the character of our works should be. This is confirmed by the steady resistance which Jesus always made to those who craved for signs and

wonders. Not only were the subjects of His miracles unremarkable among their fellows, except as having been restored to the ordinary state of human life, but He checked all curious eagerness to see even this act of restoration done.

We may then learn how to work even from the miracles of Jesus. We must try to help people to get the better of their sicknesses and sins, being cast down by no failure to produce any marvellous results, but content if so be that we relieve a brother of his burden, and turn a sinner from the error of his way. To let the oppressed go free, so that he may do his duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call him, is the greatest restorative work we can do for another. To discharge our own duties in the spirit of Christ, who pleased not Himself, is the highest flight of Christian service towards our Father which is in heaven.

There is no need of haste, nor of straining to set an example, nor of pointed patronage, nor of strong ecclesiastical colouring, nor of

forced religious language, nor of extraordinary results, if we would work with the aim and after the fashion of the Perfect Man.

I cannot, however, close these remarks about the work of Jesus without asking whether there is any thing in His greatest act, viz. the sacrifice of Himself upon the cross, which can guide or inspire us in our works. I think there is. I think that it may teach, as well as save us.

Look at the purpose of Jesus: "He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." And the spirit of this vicarious suffering must animate every one who has to deal with the helpless, the ignorant, and the sinful. It is not merely that he bears with them, but he suffers for them, in little things, it may be, yet truly. Every godly parent undergoes for the sake of his simple children, pain which those children will probably never know of. I do not mean only that he may have to deny himself to feed them, but he shields them from sorrow which they would have to bear if he did not. He

keeps his trouble to himself that it may not vex them. The true teacher, too, who has to deal with many who are not willing to learn, but must be taught, patiently bears provocation, and the irksomeness of slow progress, for his scholar's sake. He conceals the disappointment which, if expressed, might relieve himself, but could not be expressed without a risk of disheartening the learner. So, too, a noble soul, whether it be in a man or a child, will suffer for the fault of others, rather than exonerate itself by tale-telling and transferring the blame to the offender. This may seem to be a question of honour alone, but true honour is very near Christian dignity and forbearance. That which is called self-respect is often radically unselfish, being in truth not respect for self, but for the highest principle of life. The Christian feels this readiness to suffer for others consecrated by the sacrifice of Jesus Himself. The particular act of self-denial may be small, but it draws its grace from a large source.

Again, the Christian learns from the willing-

ness of Jesus to die the charm of voluntary submission. He does not make a virtue of necessity. The beauty of his patience or sacrifice lies in the liberty which men give him to resist or retort upon the adversary. This is indeed the charm of all service to God. He is Love, and would be loved. He does not ask for grudging obedience. What we do from fear is done not for His sake, but for our own.

And, above all, the Christian who endures any thing for another does so that he may draw him to God. Here Jesus is an example to every one. He who suffers for another aright does so for the sake not of any ulterior advantage he may gain himself, but for those high motives which raise men's souls heavenwards. He suffers rather than decline from them. Give them up, and the path of life is so far the more cumbered and narrowed to every pilgrim.

But the motive of Jesus in suffering is specially needful to all spiritual pastors and masters. The object of the pains they take

and bear should not be to increase their own influence, but to lead men to their Master. The aim of all their teaching should be, that men may draw nigh to God and learn of Him Himself. The true pastor leads the sheep into the Lord's fold. He does not interpose his office between the sinner and the Saviour, but spends himself that the sinner may find the road clear, and be brought into closer communion with His Father which is in heaven. Even in His greatest act we may see that men may learn from Jesus how to do the work to which they are called upon earth.

Thus, to glance back at the ground over which we have passed, we learn from our Lord, whether we look at this work in its social, religious, or miraculous aspect. We see His aim, His principle. We do not so much seek to repeat any special deed or copy any particular form which His deed assumed. We use His life in doing our duty, that life which shone before men not only to show Perfect Man, but to show how man may serve God aright. We use that Spirit which was His, which led Him, and

which He promised as the inheritance of His people, His Church: I mean the Holy Spirit, which seeks to lead and teach us, which speaks in the life of Christ and in the conscience of man.

THE TEACHING OF THE PERFECT MAN.

His Parables.

EVERY man teaches, more or less. The power to do so is a chief characteristic of humanity. Whatever approaches to intelligence other animals may exhibit, whatever they may be taught to do by man, however surprising their powers of communication among themselves, they do not teach one another any thing which they have learnt to do outside the circle of their own instinct. Within that they make no progress and hold no school. The bird constructs its nest without an apprenticeship in building. It builds in the first year of its life as strongly as in the last. It neither learns nor teaches its art.

But man is a teacher as well as a learner; and among all the conflicting systems and theories of education it is of the first importance for him to know how to teach aright, what lessons to set, what motives to arouse, what influence to exert in so doing.

And as he may learn from the Perfect Man how to work, so from the Same One may he learn how to teach.

The way in which Jesus taught is no less full of wisdom and significance than are the words He spake. He used chiefly Parables, Questions, and Maxims; and I think we shall see, in examining them, that His method was to stir and set up an action in the minds of His hearers, generally leaving something unsaid which they were to seek for themselves, and use according to the receptive powers which they possessed. He never pressed them with hard exacting definition. He never checked honest inquiry with a final peremptory dogma. His dogmas were suggestive statements of some principle which kindled thought instead of crushing or silencing it.

He replied to questions by questions, and did not give a conclusive answer without letting His disciples see that there was a reason for it, which He either rendered in full, or hinted and gave them the clue to by some illustration or analogy.

We shall see this more fully when we come to examine His mode of teaching by questions and maxims : at present we will confine ourselves to the consideration of His method by Parables.

The Parable was His favourite vehicle of instruction. We are told more than once that without a Parable spake He not unto the people. We do not know how many He uttered. Thirty are recorded. These probably are but a proportion, perhaps a small one, of the number He spake. Sometimes they are delivered singly, sometimes, as in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, in rich succession. They were addressed to men of all ranks and minds and callings; to the multitude upon the seashore, to the disciples in the house, to the Pharisees in the Temple.

They embraced all subjects; the beginning, the growth, and the end of His kingdom. They were used to teach all duties and virtues; repentance, obedience, faith, patience, charity. They showed that man has communion with God, and that we are every one members one of another. There is no truth which we do not find involved in or touched by some one of the Parables. There is no capacity for loving righteousness in man's heart which they have not at some time or another, it may be in an unexpected and yet intimate way, reached and kindled. There are no tender thoughts crusted over and hidden beneath a rough outside which they have not found, cherished, and brought forth. There is no timid sense of protest against that which seems cold or conventional in religion which they have not felt for and replied to.

Thus they have sunk deeper into the human heart than perhaps any other portion of God's word. They are familiar to the learned and the unlearned, the reverent and the profane. They delight the scholar in his study and the

shepherd on the hill-side. They are appealed to by the philosopher and the fanatic. And the fiercest of theological adversaries find themselves on common ground in the Parables of Jesus.

Some have been almost rudely torn out of the Gospels by the world, such as that which has left the sound of its name upon the meanest Lazzaroni in the streets; while the stories of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son have spread a sense of protection, a shield of tenderness, over many who have given without charity and lived riotously without repentance. And this is well. They are God's protest against our thrusting the beggar and the spendthrift out of the circle of our kin. We seem almost to owe these so-called outcasts a debt for the words of kindness and love which Jesus uttered concerning them, and which from them have spread on to all the rest.

We cannot, as I have said, suppose that we have inherited all the Parables which Jesus spake. They flowed from the abundance of

His heart, and continually fell from His lips. They are not like the flowers of the aloe, which blooms, they say, once in a hundred years, but rather like the clusters of the vine to which He compares Himself, ever shedding fresh fruit, and yielding wine which gathers a better smell and taste the older it grows.

Were it only in regard to their plenteousness we might say that Jesus spake mostly by Parables; but it is only when we look into the Parable itself that we can judge of its abundant fulness.

The school-child is taught to say that "a Parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." And, as definitions go, there is a suggestive sense in this. For the Parables of Jesus are not only stories of what might probably happen, but of what is coming to pass and taking place every day and hour in this earth of ours. They are planted in and grow from common things. Jesus did not go out of His way for their scenery and plots. They are not far-fetched, intricate, or magnificent. They belong to no region of fairy-land and romance.

Sowers in the field, fishermen casting nets, labourers at work in the heat of the sun, women sweeping the house, neighbours knocking at the door, barren trees, marriage-feasts, beggars in the street, strayed sheep, hypocrites in church, rich fools, idle servants, busy traders : all these and such as these are used by Him to set forth and lead us into the deep things of heaven and earth.

And if we have ears to hear, this teaches us much. For it was not that Jesus chose some happy images wherewith to illustrate the truths He wished to teach, but He made nature and social life eloquent with the voice of God.

It is often said that nature and revelation agree, and that the leaves of the trees and the leaves of the Bible come from the same Author. The voice of God sounds in the world as well as in the Church.

But the educated Jews, though familiar with the Book which contains the rich imagery of David and the prophets, had so starved themselves upon dry precepts and tradition as to lose the power of perceiving this. The

common people heard Jesus gladly ; but the teachers of the law were offended at Him. They could not bear to see the multitude, down to the very children in the street, hail One who taught not as the scribes. To the upper sort among the Jews God was a god of retribution and exclusive austerity. Religion was a matter of ecclesiastical etiquette. The right of entrance to the courts of heaven was reserved for the select few who mastered the tedious routine of devotional ceremony.

“This people,” they said of the crowds that gathered round the Parable-telling Jesus, “which knoweth not the law, are cursed.”

And so they disposed of the matter. But Jesus brought a bright golden key of knowledge instead of that which rusted in their hands, and unlocked the secrets of the world in which we move, quickening with His touch each thing as He pointed it out in the treasure-house of God, showing the beauty and wisdom of that which men had long seen, but did not understand, making them feel the threads which knit heaven and earth together, and

kindling the hearts of the simple with a sense of God's wonderful nearness.

Such was the magic of His Parables, which wins the soul of the wisest Christian as they did that of the Galilæan peasant. To them the mind, wearied with the importunities of theology, or the pains of thought, returns to be at rest. They dictate, indeed, no form to our faith; but they cherish it with substance Divine. They come to us dressed in no grand and learned language, and yet they appeal to the deepest mysteries of our spiritual being. They teach the profoundest truth, and yet brim with the tenderest sentiment.

As one overstrained by the scenes and toil of London life escapes gladly from its iron hum and atmosphere of wakeful intelligence, and, may be, walking alone in the pleasant places of the country, or sitting on the rounded shingle by the drawl of the dying tide, feels his mind uncoil and gather health no less than his body, so do we get refreshment from the Parables of Jesus when we have been grinding at the mill of ecclesiastical religion.

And the charm of it is that His Parables are but patterns of what exist in plenty, gold picked out of the sands of life that we may sift and search for ourselves, fruits gathered from a tree off which we may eat and be full.

For by them we learn that God is speaking to us from all things around, in the voices of the fields, the sea, the city, the wayside, the workshop, and the hearth; adding indeed, in Holy Scripture, a commentary to His own Creation, but by that Creation and man's commonest ways teaching us of Himself.

It is not that nature supplied Jesus with illustrations, but He showed the deep meaning of this natural life. He did not clothe our daily words and works with a new sense, but brought out that which had been overlooked or lost, like some rare and ancient manuscript of a Gospel which has been written over by a monkish legend.

All these things, He said, speaking of the common incident on which He founded the Parable of the Sower, are done, or rather have their being, in Parables. They exist already,

and may be known by those who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

True knowledge is no mere accumulation of facts or theories which may be added up, printed in books, and sold at so much per volume. The Apostles and Prophets of the old and new dispensations were not set by God to compose a dry cyclopædia of detached maxims, but rather to make a key for the interpretation of facts and things we feel and see around and within us.

Of this the Parables of Jesus, and His parabolic illustrative way of teaching, are the clearest proof. He came, among other things, to open our understandings that we might understand the signs of the earth, the water, and the sky, as well as of the Scriptures. Not only is there, as has been said, a statue in the roughest block of stone, but there is a Parable in the round of the commonest life. So much so that, in a very true sense, according as we look with the eyes of Jesus, the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the seas.

And now let us return to the question, How does the teaching of the Perfect Man by Parables help us to teach? Thus: it shows that true teaching is not the mere putting of facts and figures into a man's head, but the kindling of that power which enables him to perceive and know. This is, indeed, kept sight of in the very word Education, which is an educating, or a nursing and raising of something which we already possess, rather than a giving to us of any thing which is foreign or new.

When therefore we teach—as who does not, more or less?—one chief Christian way is to open men's eyes that they may see an inner or a second sense in what goes on around, or is laid before them.

And this holds good in all teaching, whether it be what we call secular or religious. To the true Christian indeed nothing is secular, if by secular we are to understand such things as are not related to God. The simplest lesson is rooted in Him. The true Christian, whether he eat or drink or whatever he does, does all

to the glory of God. He never loses hold of the Divine way and the Divine aim, though he may seem to be merely teaching the alphabet to a dull child. He does not indeed always feel himself bound to proclaim that his processes are godly—nay, he is not filled with a distracting consciousness that they are such—but they are godly, and he sheds a sense of good work about all that he does.

The chief characteristic of his way of teaching is revelation. He reveals the truth under his hand. He strives to open the scholar's eyes to the meaning of the facts and things placed before him. He tries so to teach that he may set up an apprehensive action in the mind with which he has to do. This is the case whatever the subject of the lesson. It is so in the conduct of religious instruction. A man who can thus stir and quicken the receptive powers, does another far truer service in the getting of Divine knowledge than if he were to crowd his memory with definitions of holiness and faith.

Thus, too, we deliver men from the hard, painful impression which a stiff, mechanical

reading of the Bible is sure, sooner or later, to create. We free them from the bondage of the letter. We bring them within the sound of God's voice both in the world and in the Church.

We do not so much lay down the law ourselves, as lead men to God who is the Head Master of the school of life, putting them into communion with His teaching Spirit by which He has promised to guide us into all truth.

If we be true and earnest, and not mere pedants in religion, we shall by our renderings of Christianity in our lives and conversation keep on spreading the fire of God's grace, which can never be shut up in a man, but must be shed out by him, if it has entered into him at all. The Christian is himself God's chief vehicle in disseminating the knowledge of Christ.

In so far as we catch the spirit of the Parables, in so far as the inspiring Jesus has kindled life in our hearts, so we perceive Him and hear His voice eloquent in the scenes of the

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world, we enable others to learn about the things which are unseen by those that are seen, and find even in this dull earth and its doings a Parable of the kingdom of heaven.

THE TEACHING OF THE PERFECT MAN.

Questions and Maxims.

WE have already seen that the teaching of Jesus is notable for its suggestive character. When His disciples asked Him why He spake unto the people in Parables, He replied, "Because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." That is, they were dull and slow to take in what was plainly set before them.

In order that we may embrace and conceive a truth, we must, more or less, feel after and accept the germs of it ourselves. Thus Jesus was eminently the Sower of seed. He did not place full-grown trees in the field of God's kingdom. He did not nurse saplings of grace in a Spiritual hothouse and then plant

them out, but He sowed seed, with the promise, made specially to such as heard His Parables, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."

A hint sets us thinking, while we often fail to bite into a truth which is already thought out. It is better for most of us to feel that there is something to be learnt than to be presented with the smooth, hard result of another man's learning. We may have this last and yet have it not. Seeing we see not, and hearing we hear not, neither understand.

Hence Jesus, who spoke more plainly to such of His disciples as could apprehend the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, taught the people in Parables. He quickened sluggish, and fed inquiring souls with partial revelations of truth. For them He drew the curtain of nature and social life but half aside, giving them in His Parables only glimpses into this treasure-house of God's wisdom,

and then leaving them to seek it for themselves.

But He spake in other ways, with authority ; judging, replying to questions, and laying down laws of life. There were many truths which He showed unto His disciples and left as an inheritance to His Church, but which He did not utter in Parables. We will now therefore look at the teaching of Jesus as seen in His sentences, answers, and maxims.

A careful reader of these may observe one mark which is common to them all. Jesus avoided minute and categorical statements, especially about those things which we believe to be most weighty and valuable.

Men like definitions. They want the Spiritual laws of God to be set forth in lucid order and settled by precise infallible decisions which they can turn to and consult. But it is remarkable that Jesus did not satisfy this desire. He not only loved to convey His doctrine in a figure, as when He spake in Parables, but He commonly answered a question by a question, and when He uttered a

maxim it was generally either the conclusion of some matter about which He had reasoned with His hearers, or some broad principle of life, rather than a rule for its conduct. He either turned the inquirer back upon himself at once, or left him with an answer so large that it did not directly fit the niceties of the question which had been put. In either case He appealed to the man's own head and heart, not indeed as to another arbiter who stood without the matter and could form an independent, unbiassed opinion on the things of God; but in appealing to the man He really appealed to whatever there was of God within him. If he was "of God," "of the truth," if he had the principle of truthfulness, then he could hear His words. If the man had no such receptive power, then definitions could not impress nor questions arouse him. He was inaccessible to the influence of Jesus, who conveyed His lessons only to such as were willing to seek for truth. Jesus would not give full and final directions which admitted of no further inquiry. He would not lay down stiff

rules which took the matter wholly out of the man's hand. He implicated those who addressed Him, or whom He addressed.

This is seen in those passages in which He appears as the Judge of mankind. We may perceive this the better if we recollect that in the Old Testament the Divine voice of Judgment comes in the form of questions. From the first day of human disobedience in Paradise up to the last years of Jewish corruption, God is represented as judging by questions. Adam feels them crowd around him. "Where art thou?" "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree?" And we know how unceasingly the old Prophets pleaded in the name of the Lord with the stubborn and superstitious Jews.

After the same way Jesus, who knew what was in man, and what he needed, and what he might become, appears as the questioning Judge. This is seen again and again throughout His life. Even in the great Gospel picture of the last judgment, He is represented as silencing the guilty, not by smiting them on

the mouth, but by appealing to their own consciousness of the way in which they had treated such as were despised and rejected of men.

We are all tempted to assail or creep round a compact and minute decision which comes to us from without, and, though we may be compelled to submit to it, to question its justice. Hence Jesus puts His sentences in no such form as can be evaded or attacked, but rests their acceptance finally upon the man's own God-given sense of that which is true and right. He gives reasons even in uttering His woes. He makes Abraham say to the damned Dives, "Son, remember." This marks Jesus eminently as the just Judge, ever separating the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the chaff. Sitting on the great white throne of Truth, He dispenses the sentences of His word in questions which lead the faithful on to a better knowledge of God, and make His adversaries ashamed before His face.

And as with His judgments, so with His answers. When tempted by enemies and

appealed to by friends, He answered by questions. These are so frequent as to deter quotation. Still, however familiar they may be, let us look at a few. A pompous lawyer asked Him, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replied, "What is written in the law, how readest thou?" And when the man had quoted the law aright, but, feeling himself foiled by the rejoinder, "This do, and thou shalt live," put another question, "Who is my neighbour?" Jesus replies with the parable of the good Samaritan, adding at its close, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?" At first and last in this dialogue He replies with an inquiry. It was His way of answering. When accused of profaning the Sabbath He replied to His accusers by putting questions which compelled them to admit that the exceptions to any rule about the observance of the Sabbath must be left to their own human divinely instructed sense of that which was needful and right. So also in other matters throughout the record of His

conversation. He perpetually answers by questions. Even at the last we find Him using the same fashion of speech. He rebuked the vile eagerness of the multitude who came to apprehend Him with the question, "Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves, for to take Me?" And He answered Pilate's question by demanding, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?"

And He replied to His followers after the same manner, meeting the ambition of James and John with the question, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?" and checking the zeal of Peter who had committed Him to the payment of the Temple dues with the inquiry, "What thinkest thou, Simon?" And in most cases He tested the petitions of those who came for cure by asking whether they had faith to be healed. From the day when as a child He replied to His mother's plaint by an inquiry—"How is it that ye sought Me?"—up to that on which He answered Philip's request that He would show him the Father by saying,

"Hast thou been so long time with Me, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" we find Him constantly answering His friends as well as His enemies by questions, as the best means for bringing them into contact with that Will which He obeyed Himself.

And when He uses other forms of speech in teaching we find the same spirit indicated, even in places where we might least expect it. He not only judges and replies by questions, He lays down the law. How often do we meet with the august beginning of some discourse, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." And yet His maxims, though truly dogmatic, were not austere-ly prejudged. They were decisive, but they led to rather than announced a decision. Some of the most famous of His great sayings appear at once in the shape of a question, such as, "What shall a man be profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Others are closely associated with an inquiry, such as, "Every one that asketh receiveth," to which He immediately adds, "What man is there of you, whom if his son

ask bread, will he give him a stone?" Others are the conclusion of a discourse, "Be ye *therefore* perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," or "So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be called, but few chosen." Others again are followed by an explanation, or have some reason assigned for them, such as His prohibition of swearing, which is enforced by the consideration that we really have no power to give effect to our oaths, inasmuch as we cannot command heaven or earth, nor even make one hair white or black.

A long list of such examples might be given. It would be well worth the reader's while to search the Gospels carefully through with an eye to these characteristics of our Lord's teaching by sentences and maxims. It will be found as a rule, that even where He taught with authority, and not by Parable or figure, He did not lay down a naked arbitrary rule which decided the matter at once from without, but pointed to some principle capable of application by His hearers, or in some way appealed to their

inner sense, which compelled them either to answer or condemn themselves.

And this appears even in His treatment of the highest mysteries. I might instance His answer to the Sadducees concerning the resurrection of the dead, which no one can study without feeling that he has come across a line of argument wholly diverse to that which is used by some dogmatists, and which appeals not to the analogy of nature, but to the sense we have of the eternal inseparable connexion between the righteous soul and the righteous God. God, He would say, cannot be the God of any thing that is dead. All Divine life is necessarily everlasting.

But we cannot have a stronger example of His averseness to arbitrary dogmatism than in His reply to the Jews when they charged Him with blasphemy and offered to stone Him for saying "I and My Father are one." First He answers with a question: "Many good works have I showed you from My Father; for which of these works do ye stone Me?" They replied, "For a good work we stone Thee not,

but for blasphemy, because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God." Here was a distinct challenge that He should either abate or make good His claim. And how does He meet it? Not by peremptory assertion, not by putting the question aside as too august and mysterious for inquiry, but by appealing to His accusers' sense of truth in confirmation of His title as Son of God. Jesus answered, "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If He called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken, say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?"

Nor was this a mere thrust of Divine fence, intended to discomfit His enemies without entering into the merits of the charge brought against Himself, for Jesus goes on to show reason why they should admit His Sonship. "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not; but if I do, though ye believe not Me" (i. e. do not believe that I am the Son of

God merely because I claim that title), "believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him." Thus He supported the central truth of our Creed, not by the assertion of a right which He would not bend Himself to justify, not by laying down an absolute dogma and demanding assent on the ground that He had uttered it, and that therefore there was an end of this matter, but by appealing to such witness of His relationship to God as His accusers had within their reach.

We have now seen the leading characteristics of the teaching of Jesus. They reveal the principle which He followed, and which marks the nature and the influence of Perfect Man. The theological and scholastic world may be broadly divided between those who teach men *what* to think, and those who teach them *how* to think. Both profess to set facts before their scholars, but the former seek more to enforce fixed views about those facts than to prove that the facts are true and leave them to produce wholesome opinions. The latter rely more upon the power which God gives man to

draw conclusions from established facts than upon the power of the teacher to impart his own views. The former make it their aim to defend what they believe to be truth; the latter to discover truth, and to trust that it will defend them.

It is for the Christian student to find out from the record of our Lord's Parables, questions, sentences, and maxims, to which of these two systems the teaching of Jesus belongs. It is well to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest His words not only for the immediate comfort and guidance they give us in the conduct of life, but in order that we may apprehend and appreciate the claims of the great principles of education which prevail in Christendom. It is well to ask which best becomes and promises to educe the Perfect Man. Does he use and is he formed by weighty dogmas which forge him irresistibly into shape, or truths which are submitted to his receptive powers, and by the perception and assimilation of which he grows into the right stature of man?

THE SUFFERINGS & DEATH OF THE PERFECT MAN.

THERE is something in a very prosperous man from which we shrink. We may wonder at him, we may stand in the crowd and clap our hands as he goes by, we may congratulate him on his good estate and point him out to others as the favourite of fortune, but in our tenderest moods, when our spirits are bare, or we are touched with the deeper sentiments of life, this manly tune, this brave procession of success grates upon us as the cheers and trumpets in the street do upon a man who is praying in the chamber or sitting by a death-bed. It is not that we are jealous, but we are conscious of something which jars with the craving humour of our souls. We yearn for sympathy and rest. But the man

high fed with good luck, who prances gaily by, seems to shut up our heart and drive us back upon ourselves. What does he know of those fine pulses of spiritual life which throb or fade as we are filled with hope or are cast down and perplexed? He may serve to point a triumph or adorn a holiday, but when we leave the shouts of the multitude to commune with ourselves and be still, his power fails to reach and satisfy us. He remains in the street and cannot enter into the secrets of our heart.

Hence in the Perfect Man we gladly hail One who not only has all power given unto Him in heaven and in earth, but is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, tempted on all points like as we are. In Jesus we see not merely the mighty Conqueror taking His seat upon the right hand of God to the chorus of the heavenly host, and quickening His followers with the fire of victory, but the patient, suffering friend who knocks at our door when we are lonely, sad, or bitter, and comes in to us full of compassion and tender mercy. He not only cheers us by His sympathy, but He

teaches us that those weaknesses and seeming failures which the strong world despises as signs of littleness and imperfection are not such in the sight of God, but are the necessary accompaniments of that life which is perfected in Him.

The bodily sufferings of Jesus are reckoned His heaviest by the world. Perhaps we look at them too much. We can see the wound in the flesh while we cannot see the wound in the spirit. Still it gives great strength to the band between us and Jesus to think that He felt hunger, thirst, weariness, and pain. It shows us that Christianity is no mere high-flown set of truths which exercise the spirit and the intellect alone, but that it is mixed up with the commonest round of homely sense, and concerns the taste and touch of all alike. Those who know little or nothing of the finer sorrows of life—those inheritors of blood which has been dulled through long generations by hard fare and coarse toil—have One who can feel for them in Him who was hungry, buffeted, scourged, and spit upon. The Perfect Man is

not separated from the poorest drudge. The highest station among men is but ill filled by one who has no feeling for the meanest pains of man and beast. He who is truly great is the closest friend of the small; and any professed superiority to the vulgar pains of life only shows an ignorance of what life really is. Hence we hail in the thirst, weariness, and bodily sufferings of Jesus that sign of His humanity which unites Him to the simplest and most earthly among ourselves.

But we must not make too much of these things, nor try to show that they were laid most heavily upon Him. We have read of tortures so hideous, exquisite, and prolonged, as to exceed any bodily pains which soon ended in death. The troubles of Jesus were not chiefly in the flesh. He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. It is here that we may best find sympathy in Him, and learn that the holiest life, the purest mind, and the most perfect faith may be accompanied and marked by the deepest heaviness and vexation of heart.

There is no more mischievous fallacy than to suppose that a godly man is necessarily a cheerful one, in the common sense of the word, or to think that we can test our progress towards the measure of the stature of Christ by the satisfaction of our own souls.

It is true that Divine melancholy and vexation of heart is concealed in some good Christians by a natural force and warmth of disposition, but often beneath the most vigorous and genial utterances of these men there may be perceived a vein of sadness and tender sentiment which characterizes the inner life. Their words are often bright and sweet, like flowers; but they are like the flowers in a country grave-yard. They are natural, but they spring out of mournful, consecrated ground. Thus the devoted Christian may show a sunny surface to the passer-by, and really rejoice in the expression of much that is obviously gladsome to others, while yet all along his life is rooted in the grieved and sorrowful Jesus.

The higher a man's aim, and the more

devoted his will to the service of God, so much the more sensitive is he to the pressure of the evil which encircles him. Large and tender hearts are wounded on all sides, while the small and hard pass on untouched. Smiles and sunshine are natural, and God in His mercy permits us to rejoice in many good things of this life; but the great Ones of the Earth, those who bear chief witness to the unseen, are often marked by a spirit of sadness in the midst of their strength. This was conspicuous in Him who stands high above the highest. Jesus was beset with sorrows. His face may have shone upon the mount, and the fashion of His countenance have been altered as He prayed, but when the voice had past and He was come down to the multitude, it was to bewail the unbelief of His disciples, saying, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" The joy that was set before Him, and for which He endured the cross, despising the shame, did not save Him from the sickness of dismay and the bitterness of

disappointment. As man He not only marvelled at the faith of the centurion and unbelief of the Nazarenes, but mourned over the stubbornness and ignorance of those whom He loved. He was misapprehended, and He knew it. He would have gathered His people together unto Him, and they would not come. Their perverse expectations and mistaken offers of honour drove Him to escape in prayer. Their Hosannahs, their wayside cheers, made Him weep. His persecution too was the more bitter because it came from the Church rather than from the world. Pilate was, after all, but the tool of the priest. As far as he himself cared, or was concerned in the matter, Pilate was the only one who had a word to say for Jesus. While Jesus yearned to fulfil the law and declare its spirit, the expounders of the law were his chief opponents. The charges brought against Him were of blasphemy and ungodliness. In a very sore and trying sense He came unto His own and His own received Him not. In the eyes of the Church as well as of the world no one met with so little suc-

cess as He. He passed away; and to the priest, and to the magistrate, and to those who held by them, His name was at first a by-word of reproach and failure. This, however, was foreshadowed in His life. While He lived His brethren did not believe in Him. Though crowds sometimes followed Him, few of His words appeared to take root, few of His fastenings to hold. The people were quick to take offence. Once they fell off so coldly on all sides that in the sorrow of desertion He turned even to His chosen twelve, with the question, "Will ye also go away?" Brimming with love towards all, solaced by no spirit of resentment, which consoles small minds when they are repulsed, He went His way, healing, pleading, praying, and yet conscious of incessant misapprehension, until at last, while He still clung to the comfort of human sympathy, and tried to wring some support even out of His weary disciples, pleading with plaintive love, "What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?" He is forsaken even by them, and left alone—alone with Him who is the sole hope of man.

Such, in some degree, and at some time, is the lot not only of every true leader of mankind, but of every true member of Christ. He who aims high must be content to make his pilgrimage in solitude, though he marches ever in the throng of crowds. And thus throughout the life of Jesus He is joined to us in His sufferings.

Nor as man is He separated from man at the last. If His ministry was sad throughout, if He was checked and crossed, if the point of His words seemed often to miss those at whom they were aimed, if He seldom smiled, if He was worn with work, dismayed at the weakness of men's faith, the vanity of their religion and the blindness and coldness of their hearts, if He was misunderstood by those who loved, slandered by those who hated, and forsaken by those who had followed Him, yet for the last there was reserved a depth of distress beneath the lowest grief that had yet oppressed Him. We cannot follow the sinking of His soul when He sweated with dread and fell upon His face in the utter-

most anguish of prayer. We cannot tell the thoughts which set Him to mourn upon the cross saying, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" We cannot know the high-wound agony of that moment when His life of suffering came to its last intolerable point, and He cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost.

But even in this we may be cheered by our relationship to Him. We learn that if so be we are not tortured with the consciousness that we are fighting against the Holy Ghost who temples within us, we may be sorely acquainted with grief and yet be on the high-road to heaven.

The man who strives to do the will of God may have his moments of transfiguration when he is, as it were, caught up into heaven, and enters into the communion of saints with a fulness which no common spiritual intercourse on earth can reach ; but he soon returns to the tribulation of this world. He that would go unto perfection, which is the true aim of the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, must

not expect to be above his Lord. He must make up his mind to be in his own small way thwarted, misunderstood, forsaken. He must be ready to forego the sweets of selfish indignation. It is not for him to turn upon the stupidest, cruellest opponent with contempt. He must submit to all this by the inevitable law which had its greatest fulfilment in the perfection of his Captain by sufferings. And he must expect the operation of the law not only on grand occasions, those great festivals and fasts of the inner life when our forces seem to be called out and put under arms as for some great and special effort, but on dull days when he is menaced by no honourable foes, when he is called to bear some petty annoyance or discharge some trifling duty. He must be ever willing to be misunderstood by man, if the face of God, on which his eye is fixed, shows an approving glance.

And he must be prepared for worse than this. He must expect sometimes to have God's face hidden, to look up towards the sun of his life and see nothing but clouds, to open

his soul to the dew of grace and feel it smitten by the hail. He must have some touches of that last terrible Christlike loneliness, when the darkness closes round and he is compelled to stand still and cry aloud in the night, without answer or return. These moments when God seems to hide His face and take His hand out of ours belong to the true following of Jesus.

May be they cloud the last hours of a faithful life more often than we think. When the spent soldier's brain is dull and his pulse weak, when his battle-worn spirit is loosening itself from the harness of the flesh, and those who stand by catch only hints and fragments of the half-entangled thought, we cannot judge of the joy with which the soul struggles into the freedom of a higher life. To us comes the sound of the last blows against its old enemies, which may seem to close cruelly around it, while in truth it is not there, but already safe in the hands of the upbearing angels. In some we may see the victory unclouded, but in others we may hear only the echo of that plaint of Jesus, as He said His psalms upon the

cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" while we miss the deep root of joy which made Him say, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

Thus Jesus teaches us even in His agony and in His very death. There is that in it which most tenderly associates Him with ourselves, which we can apprehend, and which touches us in the most close and homely way. He does not leave us as Moses is represented to have left the people, in order to die alone; but we follow Him throughout. It is true that we stand by a cross and not by a couch, but we see in Him those touches and accompaniments of dissolution which often mark the common mystery of death among ourselves. They are mightily greater than ours, but they are human; they bring us within the awful circle of His last agonies, we may continue with Him in His tribulation. We see His dread, His faintness, His thirst. We hear His prayer, His cry. We behold, in its greatest fulfilment, that fine and thoughtful tenderness for others which in some degree and at

some times is mysteriously mixed with fearful shrinkings in the last hours of dying saints. "When Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He said unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

And when Jesus bowed His holy head, and all was hushed; when the people who had come to that sight smote their breasts and returned, the death of Jesus still holds us close with cords of homely love. They wrapped Him in linen. They tied a napkin about His head. They laid Him in the grave. There is that throughout, from the sweat of dread, when He thrilled at the drawing nigh of death, to the ministration of the women who did their tender office to His body, which joins Him to us even unto the end. Thus we see the whole mystery of dying gone through by the Perfect Man. No circumstances of indignity nor after-triumph should veil from us the stages of His human death.

There is another lesson in the Cross and the scene of which it is the sign. It is impossible for us to realize that scene. The crucifixion has never been painted. No artist, however sincere, has had either the daring or the power to set it before us as it was. The pencil and the brush fail to represent the details of such a death. They are too coarse and horrible to find expression in a mere picture. True, every stage in the agony of Jesus has been made, again and again, the subject of representation ; but all have left us with a feeling that there must have been much more behind which no artist could set down. We are familiar with the various "renderings" of the trial in the judgment-hall, the scourging, the act of crucifixion, and the figure of Jesus on the Cross. But in every one that I ever saw there is a special halo of solemnity shed around the scene. There is a redeeming air of sad poetry about it, which is heightened by the patience of that Divine face and the wondering misery of the white-haired mother and the weeping Magdalene.

We can find no true picture of the cruci-

fixion. But this we can do : we can steadfastly resist that conception of it which dims our sense of its terrible truth ; we can refuse to let it stand apart from the world of rudeness and suffering in one of sentiment and religious romance. If not, we miss that quick sense of the Lord's sympathy with men which sanctified the tribulation of the first disciples, and may consecrate our own, however coarse and hard it may be.

In these days the cross is an ornament. It is now jewelled, gilt, pretty. It tinkles among the trinkets of the mincing girl, who hangs it round her neck before the glass. It is worn by the painted harlot as well as by the simple nun. We forget its rudeness, its burning, blushing shame. We cannot call up the scene in the guard-room, when the rough-handed, loud-laughed soldiers "took him aside," and the slaves found One whom they could insult without rebuke or stint. They might let fling their vile sport upon Him now. He was beneath respect. They gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. They had Him to

themselves for a time. They stripped Him. We cannot realize that scene. When they had done He was too faint and sick to carry His cross. No one it seems would touch the vile thing, perhaps already stained with use. They laid hold on one Simon, a Cyrenian, "coming out of the country," and on him, a frightened peasant, sunburnt and sandalled, they laid the cross to bear it after Jesus. We cannot fully apprehend the scene when His friends stood afar off beholding, and the greedy staring mob alone closed round the soldiers who stooped down about their work. We cannot picture the naked shame of those hours when He was lifted up, and they who loved Him most could only creep to the foot of the cross, in tear-blind impotent distress.

And yet all this at which we glance with sickening awe, and had sometimes rather clothe in pathos and sweet sentiment, is intended to shed upon our life a stern sense of work to be done and pains to be borne. The Cross is the emblem of our faith : not a faith which lets us sit apart in smiling cushioned ease while the

rough sacrifice is wrought outside by a devoted substitute, who calls in to share the sweets of triumph when the strife is over and the battle won. No: if we suffer we shall also reign with Him. The bitter death of Jesus on the cross is an eternal protest against that tender love of peace and comfort which so often dims the Christian's sense of duty and devotion. It is well to fix that scene of agony in our minds that the sight of it may shame our nicety and daintiness. How can we scheme for ease and praise alone in this short pilgrimage of life? We profess to be followers of Jesus, and then we shrink and wince at sharp work, or complain because we are misapprehended or overlooked, or we smile at vulgar flattery. Dare we in the face of the cross, and the tempting sweetness of sin, suppose that it is easy to do God's will? Dare we think that He who set up a living crucifix before a sensual world in teaching it the highest aims and hopes of man, is so pleased with our petty performances and feeble benevolence that when He sees one of us moderating his desires, or

making some safe protest for the truth, or of his abundance giving more largely than others to some good work, He at once sheds the peace Divine upon that man's life? No, indeed. The Christian's course is a strife throughout, in which the soldier learns to hold his life in his hand, despising those little triumphs of success and stings of disappointment which he meets with day after day. His aim is distant and high. He feels that he cannot take his armour off as long as he can strike a blow. He can never say that he has finished his work on this side of death, or death-like incapacity. When that comes it may find him as it found Jesus, more lonely and sorrowful than ever. He may feel his toils and grief and shame accumulate with growing force up to the last moment, when he bows his head, and gives up the ghost. That may be the passage of the noblest Christian through this world; and yet we are plied with pretty modern pictures of Christian progress, as if the ideal life were marked by comfort and material success. John Bunyan knew better than that. He makes

his hero step into the dark river with his harness on his back, and "when he addressed himself to the water, he began to sink, and a great darkness and horror fell upon him so that he could not see. Yea, sometimes he would be quite gone down."

A man must dismiss at once and for life the expectation of getting any earthly profit or comfort out of his faith, if he commits himself to the communion of Jesus, i. e. of supposing that earthly blessing is the thing to be aimed at, or is a grand chief consequence of that communion. Blessings accompany it here, but they are, as it were, accidents of faith. The perfect man is not necessarily a successful one, as the world counts success. He is a mere servant in the hand of God, and is freed only through death. That is as essential a step in his being as birth. It may be that God will not set him sharp pains, and then his profound dependence upon God, and freedom from care for the morrow, will enable him to enjoy sunshine, health, human love, and intellectual exercise with an exquisite wholesomeness of

appetite such as those who seek first after these things never reach. But he takes them all as wayside gifts. They are neither his wages nor his aim. They are God's, as much as he is God's himself.

Priests never spake a truer word than when they said of Jesus, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." It is impossible for the perfect man to save himself. For him there is no rest while there is need for the truth to be sought and said, and he has power to work and to endure. He must expect to fight on unto the end. The shouting crowds who hail the conquering Christian hero have no place on earth. He enlists for life. When once he has joined the army in good earnest his home is Heaven. There alone he can put aside his armour and bear the palm. There alone he can lay him down in peace and take his rest.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE PERFECT MAN.

THERE is often a profound and special quiet after a storm, when the waves settle, the sun shines, the flowers open, and the bird sings in the still air. Thus, too, there is often a mystic pause after the shock of some great grief, when we feel unexpectedly hushed; a pause before the burst of sorrow when we realize our loss.

Thus it seemed to be with the friends of Jesus. All was over. The footmarks were fresh in the dust on Calvary, but the crowds were gone, and the crosses were empty. So the friends of Jesus rested: some in timid bewilderment, behind poor bolts and bars, checking their whispers and holding their breath as a passing footfall seemed to stop at

their gate. But there is a beautiful homely touch about the behaviour of others. They rested, and prepared spices and ointment for His burial. These were the patient, loving women, who so often outried the storm of sorrow better than men. They had staggered at the shock of their Master's apprehension. They had beheld while the mob jeered and the soldiers gambled by the cross of the dying Jesus. They had borne the strain of that terrible day. They had heard His loud cry when He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. And yet they are not prostrate; but prepare sadly to pay the last loving offices to the body of their Lord. They rested, and prepared spices and ointments for His burial.

And He rested. His body lay still: surely with that mystic calm upon His face which we have seen settle down upon features which have just been wrung with pain and haggard with the sorrow of years. There is a rest of some sort in the grave itself. The corpse of Jesus has consecrated it. But this is not the true rest to the dead man. It is the bastard,

sentimental rest longed for by the hasty, the disappointed, and the desolate. This was not the true repose of Jesus, though it be scented with the odour of His holiness. His body rested in the garden-grave; and all that Sabbath day the simple Easter flowers opened their mouth toward heaven and said their parable of the resurrection in sweetness and silence. But though His body lay there, His ghost was gone. He had given it up. It is a thought which can never fade, that while we look at the dead man's quiet face, that which made him what he was to others, to us, and to himself, is not dead, but passed away out of the flesh into the boundless kingdom, even while the last echoes of life die down in the empty house.

But Jesus rose. He came again, the same and yet not the same. And His humanity is not divorced from ours, even in this last passage of His life. The resurrection of Jesus teaches us not only the rest but the rise of the man. Man is not full-grown without death. That is, as it were, only a knot in the stem of his

stature. We cannot indeed tell the process by which the fibres of his life spread themselves out again, and he enters into a new period of his being, to come to its full flower and fruit in the upper air and sunshine of heaven, but at all times, especially when we have given up the ghost, our life is hid with Christ in God. We cannot tell what is prepared for them that love or them that hate Him. It cannot be judged by sense.

True, the Bible, in speaking to us about death and the resurrection, is compelled to use human language, and adapt itself to thoughts which are admitted by the gate of the eye, the ear, and the touch; but when we have examined all the sayings which refer to a future life we feel that we have not enough to construct a risen man. We cannot explain to ourselves the process or the result of his renewed creation. We repose on the assurance which is shed into our own hearts, and supported to the minds of many by the general analogy of growth, that he lives still, after another fashion, the entrance into which he

who has fought the fight of faith may feel sure will be gain.

We have this assurance, mystic, irresistible, wide-spread, shared in some measure by the pagan of old and the heathen of to-day, felt by the civilized and the savage. Their expectations may be material or shadowy, refined or grotesque, but they all bear witness to a firm belief that there is another life beyond death. And the heart or soul of each in its most unguarded and natural moments joins in the great crowd of testimony. We may indeed so strain ourselves to put our thoughts about it into order, and so weary our reason to construct a picture of a future life, as to suffer from reaction and fall into a cold collapse of doubt; but the quick instinct of our spiritual nature recovers and reasserts itself, rising confidently above the cloud of questionings, and either in moments of fear or glad ecstasy of heart, filling us with an assurance which we can neither dismiss nor explain, that what we call death is not an end of life to us.

While, however, the resurrection of Jesus

and the things which are said concerning it in the New Testament go to show us that our humanity is joined with that of the Perfect Man when He passes beyond our present sight, we are not gratified by any such discovery as explains the nature of that state which follows the dissolution of this frame. Take, for instance, first, the famous illustration of St. Paul : "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die : and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain : but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption ; it is raised in incorruption : it is sown in dishonour ; it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness ; it is raised in power : it is sown a natural body ; it is raised a spiritual body."

We address ourselves to these pregnant words with an eager desire to wring out of them some clear conception of our future life. But when we look close, we find the expected

analogy fails us. The buried body of the man perishes without a sign, retains no germ of life. It returns wholly to the dust, whereas the grain of wheat does not die till it has fructified, and raised a living successor above the mould. If you kill the wheat, you make its resurrection impossible. St. Paul gives an illustration, rather than an analogy which is scientifically exact. He would say, "You, in your small circle and experience of sowing for a second life, see that the common corn goes through a change, and lives yet, though it be lost sight of for a while. With how much nobler a change must not we expect man to live again?"

Indeed we could hardly suppose that man, with all his marvellous capabilities, would be advanced into a higher stage of life after the same material fashion as the senseless corn. Nay, the corn is not raised into a nobler stage of being when it springs from the soil beneath which it has been buried. The grain which rises from the ground is no better, is not less perishable than the grain we sow. It has its

resurrection only to decay as its parent-seed decayed. It really has no higher life.

Still there is something in the general analogy of nature—at which we are surely encouraged to look by the illustration of St. Paul—which seems to support man's spiritual assurance of immortality. For nature does not really move in an incessant circle. It is not merely that things are ever being drawn up into a higher use, as the rain and soil into the grass, and the grass into the body of the lower animal, and that in turn into some other frame, for these go back again to their dust, to the elements of which they are composed; but higher forms present themselves in the history of life. And in man we seem to see not only the fulfilment of the plan of organic life, of which there are imperfect realizations beneath him, but the introduction of a new phase and prospect of life. In man we have not mere instinct to follow, but intelligent consciousness of God's laws. He is marked not merely by an ability to fill the place in which he is put, but by a yearning after a

higher life, which in many instances increases to the last moment in which we can hold communion with him.

Is this alone of all the appetites and expectations of man groundless? Has not this something to do with the mysterious preservation of identity when he puts off this flesh and passes away out of our sight? May there not be an analogy between the introduction of higher forms of life in nature and the being clothed with the spiritual body of which St. Paul speaks? Will man never see of the travail of his soul? Is the resurrection of Christ, of the Perfect Man, thus a revelation not of any new law, but of the onward progress of the great plan whereby God contemplated the high estate of man when He first brought him into this world, in the image and likeness of Himself? Do we not see in the risen life of Jesus a connexion between the life of man as it exists here, and its advancement into another state? The Scripture record which we have of the risen Jesus brings before us a state of life which is human, and yet, in

respect to the knowledge which we have of the plan and progress of God's creation, super-human. Jesus comes and goes after a strange fashion, and yet He is able to hold intercourse with man as man. Have we not in His a glimpse of our own future life—some light thrown upon the fulfilment of the wide-spread, deep-felt appetite of immortality? Besides saying, "God would not have implanted this appetite in man unless it had some future answer," may we not see some realization of it in the revelation of the risen Jesus?

In Him would appear the firstfruit of the new creation, revealed to men enough to impress them with a conviction of its reality so deep as to mould their whole faith and lives. It is certain that all the force and hope of the early Christians lay in their sure belief in their Master's resurrection. Without it, indeed, it would seem that we should have had no record of His work, His words, and His death. The Apostles thought that all was over. Their hopes of the redemption of Israel were dissipated when Jesus was put to death. They

went back to their homes and trades. To them His mission was a failure. The history of Jesus sprang into life because they saw Him alive again after He had died. That made His history into a gospel. That human and yet superhuman reappearance of Jesus was the ground upon which the New Testament and Christianity was built. "If Christ be not risen," said St. Paul, "our faith is vain."

In Him, then, who sets before us the perfection of every phase of life, who shows us the true aim and mission of man, who teaches us to learn, work, suffer, and die, we see what as yet we may of future human life, of the higher state into which we enter through death. Thus, passing from the plainer sight of Jesus when He fulfilled the conditions of human life up to death, we behold, with awe, a vision of Perfect Man in Him when risen.

But let us not court disappointment, and run the risk of unfairly dimming our sense of immortality, by curious efforts to realize to ourselves the nature of what St. Paul calls a "spiritual body." Let us rather bend our

whole mind to the thought that as we admit and use the Spirit of Jesus here, as we sincerely strive to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life, so we best continue with Him in whatever state God, His Father and our Father, has prepared for them that love Him.

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